LOST ENDEAVOUR

by

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PART FIRST
CHARLES HARDING'S STORY

I.

I GOT my learning, such as it is, from Dr. Carter, who kept an academy for the Sons of Gentlemen, in a great old haunted house which stood at that time (1690) near the coach road to Shooter's Hill, on the southern border of Black Heath. Dr. Carter was one of the old school, "birch and bottle men" I think they called them, because they flogged without mercy, and drank port wine without stint; but he knew a great deal of Greek, they say, and he was always very good to me, so his faults may rest His house, at one time, long before he came there, was one of the old, bad coaching inns. The cellar was said to be full of secret rooms, where the conspirators used to meet in the time of the Powder Plot. And we boys always heard that from somewhere in the cellar one could get into those secret

passages, cut under the ground, which run all across Greenwich, and away south to Chislehurst, like the workings of great moles. I went down into the cellars one night, I remember, with a boy called Thomas Davies, but we could find no secret passages. They were ghostly, damp, vaulty places those cellars, full of empty barrels, and a melancholy noise of dripping; I think the rats must have gone melancholy mad there. Old Carter came down for a bottle of port while we were there · so that we had to blow out our candle, and creep back to bed in the dark. We never went down again because, not long afterwards, they found a skeleton buried under a heap of rubbish in one of the darker corners. He was supposed to have been a traveller who had been murdered for his money in the old inn days, long before. I saw the skeleton when they brought it up into the light. It put us all in awe of that cellar, you may be sure. Who the traveller was, who can tell? There was nothing to show. The Doctor said that it was the skeleton of a man of about fifty—a black-haired, well-built man, used to taking tobacco, and perhaps limping on his left leg, the bone of which had been broken and rather clumsily set It was thought that he had lain there for seventy or eighty years. Whoever he may have been, his people had long done sorrowing for him. It made a little stir at the time. One old man came from Charlton to say that in his father's time the house had had a gallows bad name, and that it had been kept by

a man called Taylor, who was afterwards hanged for horse-stealing. One of our boys made up a story of a limping ghost (with long black hair), who appeared to him night after night, beckoning him to follow, as though to reveal where his treasure had been buried. He scared us all finely with this tale; but some of our boldest spirits sat up one night to watch for the ghost, and old Carter caught us, and soundly birched the lot of us for not being in bed.

II.

I had been at old Carter's for about three years when my misfortune came to me. I was then a lad of fourteen, rather lanky and overgrown, but still sturdy and comely. I was a steady boy on the whole, though rather a noisy one, and old Carter had a fondness for me, which proved my ruin in the end, as you shall hear. Every Friday afternoon, winter and summer, he used to send in to Deptford for his week's allowance of snuff. Generally, he sent the school-porter; but if the porter were busy, he would make some excuse to send one of the boys. He did this shamefacedly, as though he thought it wrong to ask any boy to go upon an errand for him. He would bid his messenger to go to the Deptford sweetstuff shop to buy cookies for supper, and ask him, as an afterthought, to call for his parcel at the druggist's or at the Boscobel coffee-house, which-

ever it might be, on his way home. The boys liked this going to Deptford; for at other times Deptford was out of bounds to us. The messengers sometimes escaped afternoon school, which was another pleasure to them. In any case, even if they had no money for cookies, they always had the delights of Deptford streets to recompense them for the trouble of their walk.

I had fetched old Carter's snuff half a dozen times before my troubles began. I liked the business very well, for Deptford streets were amusing in those days, when the naval docks were there. The river used to be full of shipping. The docks and building slips were full, too. It was one of the gayest, brightest sights in the world that little naval station. The ships with their flags and their scarlet gun-ports (all triced up in a line above the brass gun-muzzles) made a fair show from the river bank. And then to see a great ship coming up under sail, firing her guns to salute the flag, and all the other ships firing, or dipping their colours, moved one to the bone. There were sailors everywhere in Deptford, at all times; mostly men-of-war's men; but you must not think that I sought their company. In those days one shunned a sailor, as a sort of rough bear without a soul, who had somehow escaped hanging. Afterwards, when I came to mix with sailors, I found that people were right about them. They were a hard and vicious company, with a few good among them, but not many. Most of them were turned out of the

gaols to serve in the fleet. Some of them were branded. Some of them had been under sentence of death. Some of them were deserters from other navies. The few allowed free in Deptford were old men, whose toughness had raised them to warrants, and to some little responsibility in the hulks or arsenal.

Now a little while before my tale begins, old Carter took in a new assistant to teach modern languages. This assistant was a young man, aged about twenty-three, Spanish by birth, French by education, and English by choice—a mixture of three good things. His name was Teodoro Mora. Most English boys delight in teasing their foreign masters; but there was no teasing Teodoro. He was the strictest master in the school, and in many ways one of the best. He had travelled a great deal for a man of that rustic age. He had been in the Canary Islands, and knew a lot about ships. He once told us that he understood navigation, and could take a ship round the world. He was a man of very great physical strength, not tall exactly, but bigly made. We called him Little Theo among ourselves. I think that in some way he gave us the impression that there was a mystery about him. I know that in dormitory, when we discussed our masters, we made up romantic tales about him, instead of passing criticisms, as we did upon the others. One of us would say that perhaps he was the son of a Spanish duke, exiled for making love to a princess; and then that he was a crim-

inal, a romantic criminal, a political criminal—a conspirator or the like; another that he was a spy in French pay, sent over to report on the Navy Yard, or, possibly, to creep out one night and fire it. I don't think we believed this last, quite. If we did, we had some sneaking feeling that it did him credit, as a brave, romantic man; and although we hoped that he would not burn the Navy Yard, we hoped that, if he did, he would get away, and not get himself hanged. I shall come back to Little Theo later in my tale. I need only say at present that he was a fine, handsome, bustling figure of a man, smart at his work, an excellent teacher, and a good friend to boys in trouble. He gave us all the impression that he was a man of too much talent to be a teacher all his life.

One Friday, in March 1692, old Carter sent me off to Deptford for his snuff, with the excuse that I looked pale, and in need of a walk. "The east wind will do you good, boy," he said. He called me back after I had started. "Boy," he said, "I would send the porter, but the press-gangs are out all along the river, and if a man enters Deptford he is as good as pressed. They won't touch you, of course, but I'll give you a Protection, in case you should be questioned." He fumbled in his pockets, and at last produced some sealed envelopes, one of which he gave to me "That is a Protection," he said. "You show that if anybody lays hands upon you. Be back early, because Deptford after dark

is no place for a boy.' He thrust his hands behind his coat-skirts, and gave the peculiar throaty snort with which he always ended a conversation. I saw him going across the lawn, deep in dreams, with his yellow handkerchief trailing out behind from his pocket. I never saw him again.

I knew that the press was hot along the river; for all through the winter there had been talk of a war with France, to begin as soon as the winter gales were over. The French were going to invade England, to restore that bad king the second James; that was what people said. Why a sensible people should wish to fight for a Stuart was a great puzzle to Dr. Carter; but so it was to be. Now that the weather was getting fair, the Deptford Yards were working day and night, fitting out a squadron with sails and powder and seamen, before the French should begin the war by landing an army in Kent, and marching on London. It was a stirring time in Deptford.

I set out over Black Heath, feeling very proud of my Protection, and half hoping that I might have a chance of showing it. To my regret, it was sealed up. I was tempted to open it, to see what a Protection looked like; for, though they were common enough in those days, and could be obtained from the lawyers by those entitled to them, I had not then seen one. If I have ever regretted anything in my life, I have regretted that I did not break the seal to examine that Protection.

Deptford was in a great bustle of preparation that windy March afternoon. The creek was full of lighters, loading provision casks for the ships in the river. The yards had double sentries at their gates with bayonets fixed, ready to challenge any one who tried to enter. A few companies of troops marched in from the camp at Kensington, all the gartered legs swinging out in time to the flute, marching swiftly, followed by the women and children, in half a dozen ordnance waggons. The river was full, almost as far as Greenwich, with a fleet of great ships and the host of victuallers engaged in giving them their stores. The flagship lay off Greenwich with a signal flying, which made me think that the fleet was about to sail. I did not stay long in Deptford after getting the packet of snuff; but with so much happening all about me, in a village so tiny, I could not help noticing things. I knew that my schoolfellows would want to know what I had seen. Having bought a few lollipops at a sweetstuff shop, I started back towards Black Heath, intending to rest at the top of Point Hill, looking down on the bend of the river where the ships were thickest, before going in for supper and preparation. Some naval officers, who had been dining at a tavern in Deptford, stopped me in the road, just by the bridge over the creek, to ask me if I would like to go in a ship with them to see the beautiful foreign countries. I thought at first that they were going to press me. So I said, "No, thank

you, sir. I have a Protection," and out I lugged my precious envelope. They laughed at this, as though it were a good joke. "The young lawyer," they said. "He's got a Protection. Don't have anything to do with him. He'll get you into lawsuits." So they laughed, and let me go, and told me that I should be a man before my mother. They were wild young men, a little the worse for claret. In that far-off age the vice of drinking was common, almost universal. Even gentlemen got drunk. And when gentlemen set an example, who can wonder if they find many imitators?

A minute or two later, just as I was turning up to the hill, Little Theo came out of the barber's shop at the corner and walked over the road to join me.

"Well, Harding," he said, "we will walk home together. You've been buying lollipops, I suppose. I've been buying a new wig."

"Oh, sir," I answered, rather dashed at his daring to come so far into Deptford. "Aren't you afraid of being impressed, sir?"

"Why, no," he answered; "I wear a sword, and know how to use it. Aren't you afraid?"

"No, sir," said I proudly. "I have a Protection."

"Why then," he said, "a fig for fear. Tell me what you have seen at Deptford."

After that we set off up the steep hill. When we had got to within about a hundred yards of the road to

Lewisham, I noticed the figure of a little old woman standing against the wall of a garden, looking up the hill away from me. It was a lonely part of the road at the best of times; and just now, with the press out man-hunting, and the countryside beset with drunken sailors, robbing and cutting throats, it was even lonelier than usual. I had hardly caught sight of the woman when she turned, saw us coming, and began slowly to walk towards us, leaning on a stout stick, as though she were infirm with age She was coughing very hard, poor creature. I thought that she would break a blood vessel. When she was within a dozen yards of us, she burst out coughing so violently that she staggered back against a wall. She looked so desperately ill that I ran up to her, to ask if I could help her in any way. She was a little old woman, meanly and dirtily dressed, with dirty grey hairs poking out from under a broken bonnet. Her face was small and wretched-looking, and all flushed with the coughing, which seemed to tear her in pieces.

"Ah!" she gasped, "ah!" (pointing to a small inn along the Lewisham road), "there. Help me." I must say this, that I liked neither the woman's looks nor the thought of helping her to a tavern, from which most probably she had just issued, for she smelt very strongly of gin However, she was in distress, and the tavern, if not her home, might be her lodging, or the place where her husband was drinking; and in any case, there was

Little Theo at my side, so I caught her arm and bade her lean on me.

She leant on me so heavily that I found it difficult to walk with her. She clutched my arm with a force that gave me a great deal of pain. She was coughing hard, but less terribly than when I had spoken. In the intervals of coughing she made some attempt to thank me, with a sly thievish look out of the corners of her eyes, which made me sick of the creature.

"Ah!" she gasped at last; "ah! I'm better. To the inn, my dear. I'll be all right in the inn. A good boy. Good boy to help a poor old woman. Oh, this cough is very bad. It'll be my death. It's the dust that does it. Grinding the knives for the gentlemen"

At the inn door her coughing broke out again with great violence, till I expected to see her drop dead. She signed to me, in the storm of coughs, to knock at the door, which I did, though with difficulty, for she was clinging to me like a wrestler, and leaning most of her weight upon me. Little Theo, walking up after us, and looking with grave distaste at the woman, also knocked. About a minute after my knock the door was opened by a very evil-looking, dirty woman, with a coarse red face much inflamed by drink. She opened fire upon us at once with ready abuse. "Why don't yer bring 'er in? Don't yer see she's 'aving a fit or somethink? Don't stand starin' there. 'Ere, come on out of the street, Eliza. 'Elp 'er in, you."

She reached out for Eliza's arm, and fetched the pair of us indoors with a single tug; she must have been as strong as an ox. Little Theo, giving his support to Eliza, entered also. When we were fairly inside, the woman slammed to the door, shutting out the light.

"Wait 'ere in the dark," she said testily, "till I can get the settin'-room door open. I'm not goin' to 'ave the 'all door open to kill us all with the draught. I'll get you a drop o' somethink, Eliza."

After fumbling at a door which I could not see (for the passage was as dark as a tomb), she forced it open, letting in upon us a smell of sawdust, stale tobacco-smoke, and spirits—the filthy smell which pot-houses of the dirtier kind exude She had opened the door into a private drinking bar, one of those squalid dens "where sot meets sot in beery beastliness." A drunkard inside somewhere was talking to the pot-boy about a main of cocks, in which one called Jouncer had killed the other.

"Help me in, boy," said Eliza, coughing grievously. "Ah! this cough. It tears me in pieces. 'Elp me in. A drop a gin. Gimme a drop a gin." We helped her into the sitting-room, where she had her drop a gin, a good big drop Her cough ceased directly she had swallowed it. She began then to leer at us with sickening, half-drunken ogling.

"Weren't you a kind boy," she said, "to 'elp me 'ere? I dunno as I could a got 'ome without a kind boy to 'elp

me. And the kind gentleman, too. Wot a kind gentleman! Much obliged, I'm sure, sir."

By this time we had had more than enough of her. Little Theo said that he thought that she would be all right now that she was at home, and that we would be going. For my part I was eager to be gone. I hated being in such a place, for I had been brought up by my father to look upon a tavern as one of the devil's best recruiting sergeants. We turned out of the sitting-room, and stepped quickly into the darkness of the passage. The publican, a bloated, pasty-faced lout, with something (which looked like a duster) in his left hand, came after us from behind the bar. "I'll just open the door for you," he said.

"It's a tricky door that," said the frowsy woman who had let us in. I caught just a glimpse of her red dress in the light near the sitting-room door. Looking ahead, I saw a blacker mass in the blackness, as though some one else were in the passage. Then, before I knew what was happening, something came down, dark and stifling, round my head. I heard the woman cry out, "Got 'im, Bill? I got 'is legs." My ankles were clutched together by a cord. I was flung down violently. Something was thrust between my teeth, my arms were pinioned. I heard a vigorous scuffling, thudding noise, which told my confused brain that Mr. Mora was being tackled also; then I was lifted and tossed down again, a hopeless, motionless bundle, on a heap which, by the smell, seemed to be onions.

"There, my little joker," said the voice of the publican, "you'll be as right as ninepence" He laughed with the hard mirthless laughter of the townsman.

"Did 'e get 'is teeth into yer, Bill?" asked Eliza anxiously.

"No fear," said Bill, "I was too quick."

"Well," said Eliza, who had a quicker eye for profit than her friend. "Rip that nice little suit from 'im. Eh, lovey. That's good broadcloth, that suit. I'll be able to get somethink on that. Oh, and lovey, look at wot nice boots 'e's wearin'."

At first I did not know what was happening; it was as though I had died suddenly and found the want of a body most distressing. When I felt them stripping off my boots I realized that I was trussed up like a fowl, so that I could not even kick. There was a sack on my head, a leather wad in my mouth, and rope at my wrists, knees, and ankles. I had been trapped by a bad gang of thieves, from whom I might expect a thorough overhaul before being flung forth. I could just lie still, promising myself that I would keep calm, so that (when they came to strip me) I might make a struggle. But what can one boy do against three strong people? When they stripped me, they took very good care to run no risks of a disturbance. I was so carefully held that they got my clothes from me unharmed.

"There," they said, when they had stripped me to

my underclothes; "there, lovey. Now wot's in 'is pocket?"

They flung away the sweets impatiently, but I heard Eliza opening the bag a moment later. As she munched at a lollipop she kept reproving Bill for having flung them aside. "You know quite well as I like a bit o' sweet," she said. "Wot d'd yer fling them away for?"

At last Bill told her to hold her jaw. After this they examined the snuff, and tried it critically on their own noses.

"Wot d'yer think 'e is?" asked the red-faced woman, referring to me. "A errand boy?"

"No," said Bill; "a kid sent out by his father to bring 'is snuff back 'ome. Wot's in this 'ere envelope?"

In spite of the sack over my head I could hear everything, but it was all so horribly dark and unreal that it was liker a nightmare than life. I heard the coarse paper of the envelope crackle as they tore it open, and then I heard Bill whistle with delighted wonder.

"Wot is it?" said the red-faced woman.

"Wot is it, Bill?" said Eliza.

"Look 'ere," said Bill, "that's wot's wot. A golden, great beastly banker's draft for twenty pounds. With wot we'll get for the kid, this job's a prime cut to us, I must say."

"My," said Eliza, "wot's a kid like that doing with a banker's draft?"

"Well," answered Bill, "'e ain't doin' nuffin' with it, that's wot."

They all laughed at this, as though it were funny. It came into my mind then that poor old short-sighted Dr. Carter had given me an envelope containing money instead of the seaman's press Protection. I could only hope that he had discovered his mistake and given word to his banker to stop the payment.

"Now, Jane," said Bill, "wot you got to do is to wash your mug, put on your togs, and take a coach to this 'ere Mr. Banker for to lift this money before the paper's proclaimed"

"Ow," said Jane, "an' suppose it is proclaimed, and I'm took, wot'll 'elp me from being 'anged?"

"Your beauty," said Bill. "So run along, or I'll flat your jaw with a batten."

They argued the point for a time, but at last Jane decided to run the risk of being caught (and hung) for two pounds more than her third share of the booty. I heard her stumping about, growling sour-temperedly as she dressed for the adventure Then I heard her clumping out of the house, slamming the door behind her. I remember trying to guess, from the noise of the shutting door, how I lay with regard to it, so that, if a chance offered, I might make a dash for liberty. It lay to my left, along the passage, and probably, by the noise it made in closing, it opened by a spring catch of which I did not know the secret. Altogether, I decided with

a sick heart, that I was in a bad way. My gaolers had the whip hand of me. I had to wait their pleasure.

Bill began to talk with Eliza about the chance of getting enough for a "small keg" out of the pawning of my clothes. They argued it "back and to" for about ten minutes, with the pertinacity of brutes. I concluded that a "small keg" was some measure of gin. I sincerely hoped that they might get a small keg, and that it might choke them. I was not frightened all this time. They say that a man caught by a tiger is not frightened, but curious, full of interest in the tiger's doings, and strangely calm, so that he can reckon up his past life like a sum in addition. If I thought at all, I thought of old Carter losing all that money, and of the letter which I should write to my father, telling him of my adventure. I remember that, long afterwards, in the Indies, when I was sickening for a fever, I had just such a clear mind, and much such thoughts, not anxious thoughts, but troubled and uncomfortable. If I longed for anything it was for the night to come, so that I might be turned out of that filthy house, which seemed to be contaminated in every particle. I did not think of the black-haired skeleton in the schoolhouse; he never crossed my mind. Had he done so I might have been less easy. I gathered, but was not quite certain about it, that Little Theo had been put in another part of the house. My mind was confused about it; but I seemed to have heard a blow, which ended that scuffling

in the passage. I wondered vaguely whether he had been killed.

Presently Bill began another conversation. At first I did not understand it, as much of it was in that vile debased jargon called thieves' patter; but when I began to pick up little bits of it, my blood ran cold with terror; for now, for the first time, I realized what these ruffians were planning to do with me. Having made a good booty of me, they could not afford the risk of my informing upon them. If taken they would, all three, be hanged without mercy, so much I had realized from the first. I now learned that they were going to get me well out of the way, not by knocking me on the head, and shoving me down a manhole into the river, as was a common method in the infamous dens near the water, but by another way which would bring them in a comfortable sum. At first I thought that they meant to sell us to the press, with a drugged drunkard or two to bear us company, for the few shillings which naval officers paid to the innkeepers for hands taken from their premises. But when they began to quarrel about the prices then being paid in Virginia for white slaves (convicts or others) by the tobacco planters near the Chesapeake, I knew that we were to be "kidnapped," or "trepanned"—that is, carried across the sea to be sold as slaves for whatever we would fetch; perhaps ten pounds, perhaps more. My heart sank, when the talk of that infamous couple warned me of my fate. I

thought of my poor father and his anxiety. He would never know what had happened to me. I thought of poor old Dr. Carter, and of the efforts he would make to find us. When I thought of what it would be to these people, and of their agony, and of my own utter ruin and wretchedness, I felt myself going mad The worst despair of all was thinking that they would think me dead, and perhaps mourn for me, while all the time I should be alive and in misery, and unable to send a word to them, not so much as to say that I was alive. I remember thinking sometimes that it must all be a nightmare, and that I should wake up in bed presently, and be thankful that the dream was over. Then I thought that such wickedness would never be allowed on this earth, as for me to be dragged away thus, and sold into savage lands, in a free country, to the ruin of the life prepared for me. Hope kept burning up in me that I should be rescued on the road to the ship, or sent home by the captain, when he heard my tale: for I knew that my father would gladly pay more than my price as a slave to have me safe at home with him. Then some words from Bill about getting me to the ship unobserved, and about the certainty of the Virginian convoy's sailing the next morning, if the northerly wind held, dashed my hope down again, till I was nearly delirious. I fear that my misery made me very selfish. I did not think much of poor Mr. Mora, nor of what it might be to him. I think that I felt that he was a

man grown up and strong, and that nothing very bad could possibly happen to him. The tragedy, I felt, was all for me.

The time dragged by as slowly as it drags in a fever. When one is excited, evilly excited, one lives through so much in a moment that half an hour seems like a week. Thus it was now with me. I was not certain of the passage of time; but after a long, long while Bill struck a light with a flint and steel, so that he might have a look at me. Eliza said that she would get supper if Bill would "hot a drop a gin," so by that I reckoned it might be supper-time, or six in the evening. Presently some one flooded the house with a vile smell of toasted cheese and some one else added a stink of reeking spirits. The two supped together, growling about not going to wait all night for Jane, who, if she didn't come in in time, might cook her own supper. After supper they both lit pipes, and smoked strong ships' tobacco, till the air was like poison. It was over their pipes that they began to grow uneasy about Jane. They wondered if she had been stopped while trying to cash the draft (long afterwards I learned that she had been stopped), and if so, whether she would be likely to "get them all into trouble"—that is, turn evidence against them. After this I learned, from a chance remark of Bill's, that the drunkard whose voice I had heard on entering that house was "sleeping proper," owing to a dash of some drug in his last pot of gin. He, too, would "make the

grand tour," said Bill, and "fetch a good twenty, anyway." So we were to have company, it seemed. I do not know that anything else happened worth mentioning during that miserable evening. I think that I can say all, in saying merely that I was in a dull, shaking delirium of misery, which need not be described more fully.

III.

It was two in the morning (I could hear the clocks of the churches) when a cart came to the door to carry us away. Jane had not returned, so Bill, to his evident disgust, had to take us down to the ship to barter us, dressed up as a woman, for fear the press should take him. The driver of the cart was an old crone, who sat on the shaft smoking a pipe. She asked Bill if he weren't making his fortune. Bill sourly answered that it wasn't none of her business if he was. Then with Eliza's help he flung the drunkard into the cart, and pitched me on top of him, with Little Theo, evidently unconscious still, on the top of all. Little Theo was breathing in great choking gasps. He had been knocked on the head. I remember a blessed gush of cold, fresh night air, then the shock of my collapse on to the body, and that continuous gasping breathing, like snoring, and the grunt of the drunkard as I struck him. I heard Eliza bid Bill to cover us in case the watch or the press should be

about. A tarpaulin was flung across us. Bill, gathering up his skirts, stepped into the cart, kicking my ribs because he trod on me. I heard the old crone slash the horse cruelly with a stick; I heard Eliza slam the door. Then we started off on our journey of misery, down the roads which I had so often walked when going to Greenwich on a half-holiday. It was all pitch dark to me, for my eyes were blinded; but I could guess whereabouts we were by our halts at the turnings, and once (when we passed Flyer's tanpits) the smell of the soaking leather brought back so many jolly days to me that I choked. I understood then how the criminals feel when they are driven up the town to be hanged at Tyburn. The old crone asked Bill if he were going to Tiger Wharf or to the old place.

"The old place," Bill answered, "'cos that's where the ship is lying." So turning down past Greenwich Church, we stopped at last by one of the wharfs on Greenwich Reach, within earshot of the gurgle of the tide.

Bill gave a low whistle on three notes, which was answered by three more from somewhere in the night. Then I heard clumsy footsteps clumping slowly towards us, and smelt that smell of candle-grease and hot metal which a lantern gives out when it has burnt for a long time. The footsteps came nearer, so that I could hear the lantern-ring click as the bearer raised it aloft to look at us.

"What is it?" asked a deep voice. "Is it for the grand tour?"

"Yes," said Bill. "You know what it is as well as I do."

The newcomer did not answer, but twitched our coverings off with one powerful wrench of his wrist. He felt our hands to see if we were still alive. Then reaching down, he swung me up on his shoulder as though I were a sack of shavings.

"This is a young one," he grunted.

Balancing himself in the sea style, he carried me gingerly along the plank which served as a gangway to the ship at the wharf's edge. He muttered to himself all the way, "A young one, a very young one, to be going the grand tour." Then he dropped me down, not unkindly, on to some rather hard soft stuff (so it felt), which I afterwards knew to be a sail, not yet bent, so that he might go back for the rest. After a minute or two he returned. Bill, who helped him with the other bodies, made a good deal of fuss over the exertion, as though he were in very bad condition.

"There," said Bill, "two of the best I ever sent on their travels. Now per'aps you'll talk a little English to me"

"Come on into the cabin," said the seaman; "I'm only watchman. The old man'll have to see them before you get your English talked to you (that is, your money paid). We'll fetch 'em into the cabin and freshen them up."

A few minutes later I was turned over on my face, so that my bonds might be cut. The sack was pulled off from my head, my gag was removed. I stood up, blinking, a miserable figure, under two swinging lamps in a ship's cabin. Just behind me stood Bill, dressed crudely in a woman's gown; at my side was a big burly seaman in an apron; in front of me was a row of lockers, on the top of which lay a languid-looking dark man, in a green silk sleeping suit. He was flushed with sleep; I fancy he had just been roused. He looked at me without interest for a moment, but said nothing. Then he turned to the seaman, who was waiting for a sign from him. "The other," he said curtly. The seaman cast loose the lashings on the drunkard, splashed a mug of water in his face, and finally kicked him in the ribs, without more effect than to raise a grunt. As for Mr. Mora, he was allowed to lie. The heavy breathing was enough to tell anybody that no amount of kicking could bring him to life.

"Dead?" asked the man on the lockers. The seaman turned to Bill.

"What have you been giving this feller?" he asked.

"I give him a little sleeping drink," said Bill. "He's only goin' to sleep it orf."

"And the other?"

"Why," said Bill, "I give him a whang on the nut. He's only shammin' sick"

"Shamming?" said the man on the lockers. "Be quiet. How much for the three?"

"Forty pound," said Bill.

"Take them away," said the man on the locker. "Take them out of here, and yourself too."

He was the captain and owner of the ship, but he talked with as much authority as an emperor. "Take them away," he repeated.

"Where to, sir?" asked Bill.

"That's your business."

"Come, captain," said Bill; "don't you tell me they ain't worth forty. I amn't such a pup at this job. They're well worth forty. Why, you'll get eighty for 'em in the colony."

The captain turned over on his side, hitched the rug over his shoulders, and made as if to fall asleep.

"Forty's my price," said Bill truculently, losing his temper at the sight of the captain's calm; "and you'll pay me forty, Captain whatever your grand name is, or you'll find yourself in lob's pound, although you think yourself a lord. I could pitch a tale to the magistrates'd bring your gall into your throat."

The captain opened his eyes gravely and looked into Bill's face without speaking. Bill's angry speech came to an abrupt end under that quiet gaze. When he stopped, the captain swung himself from his bed with a slight heave of his body, which showed him to be a man of fine muscular development. He dipped his

feet into a pair of embroidered slippers and stood erect, a splendid creature, with no trace of languor in all his figure. "Twenty is my price, my man," he said. "This beast here (indicating the drunkard) may die from your poison. The boy isn't worth sea-carriage. As for the gentleman, I don't like gentlemen-slaves, and you've clumped him so hard that he may die too."

Bill seemed to think for a moment as to his plan of action, and then made up what mind he had that he could gain his point by savagery.

"You give me any of your gall," he said, "I'll 'ave you fetched out of your ship and 'ung. You're in my power, that's wot you are—all the lot of yer. So cough up them forty pahnds. I don't want to stay 'ere all night. You give me wot's mine by rights. Don't you give me any of your gall."

"What are your rights?" said the captain.

"Forty pahnds is my rights," said Bill, "and I'm going to 'ave them before I leave 'ere. See?"

"I see," said the captain. "Well, there's no sense in quarrelling; let us talk it over quietly.—Bring some brandy, Mr. Mate. No man can talk business without brandy.—Sit down, Mr. What's-your-name."

He motioned Bill to a chair at the table, and sat down himself at my side, paying no more attention to me than he would have paid to a fly. Something in his face made me feel that perhaps he would hear an appeal from me, so I flung myself down in front of him

and begged him not to tear me away from my father. I suppose I had spoken twenty words of entreaty before the mate, coming in with the brandy and a couple of tumblers full of punch, choked the words from my throat with his great fist, and shoved the gag back into my mouth. The captain paid no attention to me. He merely stared at Bill, who seemed amused at my outcry for mercy. Something in the captain's stare (which Bill was too dull to notice) gave me a sense of something terrible about to happen. I remember quite plainly how the sudden sense of something terrible about to happen turned my thoughts a little from myself and in a way comforted me. I began to watch the captain, as one would watch a tiger about to spring upon his victim.

"We mustn't quarrel, Bill," said the captain; "must we?"

"You give me wot I ask, and wot's right, an' you won't get no quarrel," said Bill surlily.

"True," said the captain. "We've done business for a long time, Bill. How many have we set travelling between us?"

"A matter of thirty odd," said Bill. "I give you a matter of seven last year."

"Why, so you did, to be sure," said the captain. "Certainly you must have what is right Here's the brandy. If your punch isn't strong enough, just add from the bottle."

Bill looked at the captain with low cunning. "I

want your special brandy," he said. "None of your ordinary dollops for me."

"Oh," said the captain, "you'll find this above proof. Your very good health, Bill."

He raised his glass towards Bill and took a good draught. Bill sipped his glass to get a taste of the liquor's quality, then shot it down his throat, just as one flings earth from a shovel. Almost instantly he collapsed over the table as though he had been pole-axed. It was as though his bones had suddenly been removed from him.

"That was a strong shot, sir," said the mate calmly. "Shall I put him in the lazarette?"

The captain merely nodded. The mate swiftly lashed Bill's hands and ankles with some spun-yarn, shoved a rag into his mouth to keep him quiet when he woke, and then, pulling up a small hatch in the floor, dropped the body down into darkness.

"He was getting too uppish," said the mate. "And forty. He'll fetch fifty guineas, may be. He'll have a lot of friends there, glad to see him when we get to the West."

The captain did not answer, but, after pitching Bill's glass into the river, returned quietly to his bed upon the lockers. He just motioned to the mate with one finger to remove me from his presence.

Just outside the cabin door we found the old crone, who had come aboard for Bill. She was getting cold

and sleepy out there on the wharf, and wanted to know how much longer she was going to be kept there. The mate advised her not to wait any longer, since Bill was making a beast of himself with the captain's brandy.

"Guzzling 'og," said the old crone. "Nor I won't wait."

So ashore she went, and a moment later I heard the cart wheels crunching on the earth as she drove away. The mate took me into a dark place of many smells, close enough to the great cabin to be covered by the poop. Here he kicked about with his feet till he assured himself that the cat was not asleep on some boat covers which had been tossed into one corner of this room to be out of the way. Then he took out my gag, and gave my throat a friendly squeeze.

"See here," he said. "Your old life, whatever it was, is over. See? What your new one'll be like depends on yourself. If you scream or caterwaul, now your gag's gone, my orders are to club your silly head in, and dump you into the river. There's nothing I'd enjoy doing better. If you'll give your word not to raise the Peak here, I'll give you your hands and legs free. If not, I'll truss you up like a Christmas duck. Which is it to be?"

I said as well as I could, for I was too miserable to say much, that I would be quiet; but might I have some water.

"Water," he said; "water's for fishes. You can

have beer if you like." So he gave me some of the very weak, thin beer which sailors drink.

"You drink like Sunday Jack, who broke the brewer," he said; for truly I was mighty thirsty. "Now cover yourself in them rugs, and sleep while you get the chance. You got some sense I see." After that he locked me in for the night.

The beer, and my misery together, overpowered me. I fell into the deep sleep of utter exhaustedness, and though I woke once in a half-hearted kind of way, at a strange noise from up above me, I dropped off again and slept like a log. I woke up at last with a start, not remembering what had happened. The room in which I was was strange to me. It was fully twenty seconds before I came to myself, and realized that I was in a ship, going to be sold as a slave. I was really on my way to slavery at that moment; for the ship was lifting and rolling slightly; the water was clucking past. I could hear the creaking of timber as the ship rolled. Some mugs, dangling from hooks in the ceiling above me, inclined gingerly to one side at each roll, and then with the same deliberation inclined back. We were under way, the ship was moving. I was going from my home, from my father, from everything which I held dear, to something horrible, far off, which I could not understand nor foresee. In a fury of despair I ran to the door, and kicked and struck at it with my stockinged feet and fists. But it was fast locked: I might have spared

myself the trouble. Then, in great distress, I flung myself down upon my sail and wept myself sick.

IV.

The mate roused me out of my misery at about seven o'clock.

"You needn't blubber your heart out," he said roughly. "You ain't pretty when you blubber. You'll just rouse out and lend a hand here. How old are you?"

I told him that I was fourteen.

"Are you?" he said. "Then you ought to be ashamed of blubbing that way. And it's time you earned your living."

So he dragged me out on deck by the ear just as I was, bootless and half dressed, and put me to scrub some paintwork with soap and water. He stood over me while I worked, and made a jest of my poor success. Whenever I lifted my head to look at the English shores slipping away from me, for we were under all sail and travelling fast, he jerked a couple of hairs out of my neck to remind me of my duty. At last some one struck "eight bells" on the bell above my head, and the mate told me to knock off for a moment. Standing up, I saw that the river was full of ships under full sail, all the great Virginian convoy, bowling away down tide, with colours flying. Half a dozen men-of-war were

heading them up as dogs head sheep, firing stray guns as signals where a dog would have barked. I made up my mind from that moment, bitter as it was to do so, that my life was changed beyond hope of remedy. My task now, I saw, was to make what I could of myself under the new conditions, at present so strange and hateful to me. I remembered some advice given to me by my father upon my first going to school. He had told me to make very sure that I impressed folk favourably at a first meeting by answering smartly and clearly, acting willingly, and taking care of my appearance. It was little enough that I knew of the great world apart from this advice; but it was like hearing a word from my father to remember them at this time. It gave me a great deal of comfort. When the mate came back from mustering the watch, I went up to him boldly.

"Please, sir," I said. "May I have some proper clothes to wear while I am at work?" He growled out, like the sea-bear he was, that I had not yet earned my clothes, and that it wasn't much good giving me clothes, since I evidently couldn't keep them when I had them. Still, for all his growl, I saw that he liked me for the question. He came back to me in a few minutes bearing a "teaser," or blood-knot of hard, tarred spunyarn, with which he smacked his left hand affectionately.

"Here," he said, "can you run?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Do you know a cross-tree when you see it?"

"No, sir," I answered.

"Then I'll teach you," he said. "Them little branches on the tree there (the mainmast) is the cross-trees. And if you don't get over there and down the other side, before I do, you'll taste Nero here."

With that he darted at me lashing at me with his teaser, but I dodged him. I skipped into the rigging like a monkey, with Nero slashing at my calves just below, and the ratlines giving my stockinged feet acute pain. I went up like a bird, over the giddy futtocks, with the big man shaking the shrouds beneath me. Then, quite out of breath, I scrambled over the cross-trees, and somehow down the other side.

"There," said the mate, when he joined me on the deck, "now you've been aloft, I can make a man of you. Come below, and get some proper clothes on."

After this, I lived the life of a common ship's boy. It is a pretty hard life, without much pleasure in it. I was put in the watch with the other seamen, and did what they did, scrubbing paint and wood-work, toiling aloft at the ropes and sails, getting wet through continually, wearying my arms with pumping, getting more kicks than ha'pence, for very bad food and little sleep; but finding some of it pleasant all the same, when I could keep from thinking of my father. The mate, to whom I confided some of my story, one night when he was inclined to talk to me, told me to keep a "stiff upper lip"

and "watch out." "What's the odds," he said; "what'd you a been in the old country? A shark (a lawyer) or a preacher man. Well. Now you'll be sold in Virginia. We shall be there in a fortnight from this. What's the odds? You watch out and keep a stiff upper lip; you'll be free by the time you're twenty-one, and have money coming to you, and be a farmer on your own account. That's better than being a lawyer, and having to live in a filthy hole like London all your life."

"Yes," I said; "but there's my father; I want to see my father again, or at least write to him."

"What d'ye want to write to him for?" asked the mate. "I never write to my father. I dunno whether he's alive or not. You let well alone, my son. Providence has took you from your father. Well, don't you go agen Providence."

He was not quite certain about the rightness of this command of his, for he afterwards asserted it more strongly than before, and then very kindly offered to carry a letter to my father when the ship returned to England. He took the letter with him, but as far as I can make out it never reached its destination; though all this, of course, happened after our arrival.

V.

As for Little Theo, the knock on his head gave him a fever. He was ill for all the voyage, and not properly conscious for at least seven days. In my watches below—that is, in the spells of leisure allowed to me for food and sleep, recreation (keeping myself clean) and study (as they called greasing the mate's boots)—I used to go down to him to sit beside him. It was very shocking to see him down there in the cabin, tossing about, and moaning and talking in all kinds of tongues; but I got a sort of melancholy pleasure from it, because he was a part of my old life. He linked me on to it still in many ways. While I had him, I had something of it all beside me. I used to pray for him to get better before the ship came to Virginia. I am afraid that it was a selfish prayer. You see, he had been my master. He had seemed omnipotent then. I believed somehow that he could get me out of this scrape, if he were only up and about, strong and hearty.

The officers of the ship nursed him, fairly tenderly for sailors. The mate used to give him brandy from his own allowance. "He's a big feller," he used to say admiringly. "He'd be able to carry a Potosi pig if he had his health. That's a lump of gold, a Potosi pig is. They have them in the Potosi mines, and any one as can lift one is free to keep it for his own."

Then the captain would come down, look at the sick

man, and say perhaps, "Not so feverish to day;" or, "I believe he'll pull through yet;" or, "It'll be a dead loss of thirty pounds if this one goes through the port" (that is, dies). Then the mate would take his pipe out of his mouth and spit into the sea. "Yes, mister," he would answer. "Thirty pounds, by heck. It'd be too bad to put this one over the side. He's a big feller. He'd be able to carry a Potosi pig. Did you ever hear of a Potosi pig, captain? It's a lump of gold, etc"

They didn't put him "over the side." Little Theo slowly recovered. When he began to get better they forbade my visiting him. They kept me out of the cabin, so that we might not talk nor plot together. I only saw him once during the last third of the passage. I was up aloft, overhauling the main buntlines, and he was on the poop, taking the air for the first time. He was crippling about on deck, supported by sticks, the ghost of the man whom I had known. The mate and captain were on deck near him, looking at him just as butchers look at the beasts come in for slaughter. I did not speak to him then, nor later, but the mate brought me a message from him that night. I was to cheer up. "Your friend says, cheer up; there's nothing in being sold to a planter. So cheer up."

"Please, Mr. Mate," I answered; "may I be sold with him, so that we can be together?"

"No," he said. "He isn't fit to be sold. He won't

be sold in Virginia at all. We shall keep him aboard till he gets better, and sell him in Jamaica. But you'll be sold directly we arrive. You ain't got anything the matter with you, like what he has. So cheer up. You ought to be very thankful you're enjoying such good health."

That was the last I heard of Little Theo, my old master, for many a long day.

VI.

When we arrived at James Town in Virginia, I was taken ashore with half a dozen other unfortunates (Bill was one of them, and a mighty sick unfortunate he looked), and exposed for sale in the street. The farmers came, and looked in my mouth (at my teeth), and felt my arm-muscles. They made me feel like one of the animals. A horse or cow would have had more sympathy from them. They would have clapped a horse on the neck, and slapped the cow's flanks, calling them "Ginger" or "Sweetlips." I was merely a boy, unable to make much money for them, so I got nothing but an oath or two from the captain, who tried to sell me. He might have been a little gentler with me; for I had cost him nothing, and had surely earned my food by my hard work on the voyage. However, I must do him justice. When he did sell me, he very honestly gave me a roll of

that thin blue cloth, known as dungaree, in payment for my work during the passage.

"There," he said; "there's your wages, boy."

And then away he went, and I never saw him again, so that to this day he is something of a mystery to me. I have often hoped to meet with him—the handsome, sleepy-looking, pitiless man. When I see him, if I ever do, I will settle up a pretty long account with whatever stick comes handy.

VII.

The man who bought me was a rough-looking customer named Carteret. He paid fifteen pounds in tobacco and crude silver for me, and marched me off to his sloop, which lay at the jetty. He was pleased when I told him that I could steer a sailing-boat. When we stood off for his farm, he let me take the tiller: and though he showed that he considered me as his slave, he was kind. He told me the names of the various points of land in sight; and of the depth of the river, and the habits of its fish. He told me of the deer and the wild pig in the forests. He talked of the Indians who hunted in the forests. "The first thing you'll have to learn," he said, "is to be as like an Indian as you can. These woods aren't like the woods at home, boy. There's many gets lost here. And there's bad men in them.

And sometimes an Indian buck gets a blood-thirst on him, and he goes out after scalps, much as I'd go after a rabbit. So, while you're in the woods, you look at what the birds are doing. And if they get scared, you lie low till you see what scared them."

All the time he was speaking he was looking all about him, noticing everything from a faint smoke far off on the further bank of the river, to a string of wild fowl coming behind us. Something moved me to ask him if his farm were far away.

"No," he said easily, as though he were mentioning something quite commonplace. "Three days, or four if the wind falls."

As a matter of fact it took us five days of sailing to reach the lonely Accomac creek, known to the woodsmen as Carteret's Clearing. There was a little log-house at the creek-end. A byre for the oxen stood further up, behind wooden pales. An old negro, who was hoeing at a stump-root, hobbled up tc welcome us. This forlorn shack was to be my home for the seven years of a white slave's term of slavery.

The life on the farm was hard. I worked, generally, fifteen hours a day, at cutting and splitting trees, digging up old roots, and hauling stones off the cleared ground, to build them up later on into walls. Carteret was engaged in clearing the ground for his fields. He had burnt off some of the forest; but burning a forest is a dangerous and wasteful process. He was going to

clear the rest by axe and hoe. We went hunting every Saturday, and generally got a deer, or a wild cow, or pig, some of which we ate during the week, while the rest we salted or dried for winter use. We fished in the creek for weeks together in the spring, when the shad were running, and that was a wild, exciting, Red Indian kind of a life; but in doing it for a living one sees only the labour and the dirty, wet discomfort. I did not like it. For you may say what you like about the open-air. I say that man was made for something nobler than the gutting of fish, and the hanging them up to dry when gutted. And though it was certainly better than the sea, it was not the life to which I felt myself called by my own capacity. I was continually homesick, too, whenever I was by myself. I was worrying about my father, and longing for the talk of an English lady. Recollect that we were far away in the wilds, twenty-five miles from another settler. A few friendly Indians, and an occasional tobacco merchant from James Town, were the only people we saw, unless Carteret, feeling the forest too much for him, took me with him to the capital, where he would spend a dreary week, drinking and playing cards, while I looked after the sloop. Thus, then, two years passed. During that time I heard no news from England, nor could send any thither. I was like a transplanted tree.

VIII.

One early autumn, when the leaves were beginning to turn to the colour of embers, old Carteret fell ill of a pain in the leg. He bade me ride out to an elderly seaman named Duggan (who lived forty miles away) to get a salve; for this Duggan was reckoned a pretty good doctor by the country people Carteret was able to stump about, so that there was no danger in leaving him alone; and as for my escaping, there was no chance of that. Anybody who caught a runaway slave was very well rewarded. And where could I run to? Only into the woods to become a savage. Or to some wild gang of desperadoes plundering on the seas. So I caught the horse and saddled him, and took hobbles for him in case I had to sleep out. I also took a blanket rolled up in oiled linen, a pistol, a bag of food, and a tin can full of water for my own refreshment. Flint, steel, tinder, and a knife I always carried. I did not need a compass. I could tell the time by the sun, and the direction too. Carteret gave me my bearings carefully, for I did not know the road for more than twenty-five miles of the way.

"And look you don't get lost," he said, "for some of the way is pretty wild, or used to be. And watch out for snakes and Indians."

When I had gone about ten miles the mail-rider hove in sight. I knew the man pretty well, so I gave him a hail. He was an old settler named Harrigan. People

generally called him "Scalpy," because his scalp had been lifted in some raid. He used to ride around with the mails at odd times, whenever there were any to bring. He and I were very good friends. When he saw who it was he turned his half-tamed horse towards me, and loped up alongside, with one leg cocked easily over the pummel and the other trailing down. He sat his horse (I always thought) as though he were really a part of it, sprouted through the saddle. I think that he was partly a horse, he understood them so well; and then his rather dull long face was horsey, and his mind, always running upon horses, had developed mania, as you might say. He looked so like a horse that one expected him to whinny.

"Well, you young rip," he said, "where are you bound for?"

I told him that I was going to Duggan's to get salve. I asked for news of the world.

"Why," he said, "there's a smuggler ship in Small's Creek, running gear, it old man Carteret wants any. They've nice Europe clothes, they say, and very good weapons. You might tell him that when you get back. I promised the smuggler I'd pass the word along. Very cheap goods, and very nice. I got these Spanish silver bits of him. Spanish they are. They'd stop an alligator, let alone a pore little horse."

"They're very fine bits," I said. "They set your horse off, too."

"Yes," he said; "they give him a smart up. But I must be riding." He was just turning away when something occurred to him. "See here, Charles," he said, "I heard back the road a piece that there was talk of Indians being out. I don't know whether it's true, but you ride careful. Them red fellows come around before you know."

I promised him I would ride carefully, and that I would pass the word about the smugglers among the country people. Smugglers came to the coast in those days pretty often to get rid of contraband goods at cheap rates. Most of their goods were stolen from the Spaniards, if the truth were known. The smugglers were mostly privateers who used to cruise along the Spanish coasts, capturing the small Spanish coastwise traders. Then they would ply along Virginia, getting rid of the spoil among the settlers for whatever it would fetch in cider, apple-jack, tobacco, or hides. The people who bought the spoil were really receivers of stolen goods; but then, on the other hand, the goods were necessaries of life, and cheap. "Why," the farmers argued, "should we send the smugglers packing, and make long journeys to James Town for everything, and buy our goods in James Town at seven times the price we pay, merely to enrich a London merchant and to give a tax to the king?" They could never see why.

The Government kept a frigate cruising off the coast, with orders to capture all smugglers. I fancy that the

Governor wanted really to stop the piracy, about which the Spaniards complained bitterly, as well they might. The smuggling was a disposal of stolen goods. If the frigate destroyed the market for such things, she destroyed the profits of the cruise, and therefore indirectly the crime itself. It was made a penal offence to buy contraband. But there. Things go on among the common folk of which governors never dream. A smuggler would come in with a ship there, and the word would go about the country, and the goods would be passed ashore and sold, and the ship would sail before any sheriff had a hint of her being there. Those old lawless days of forty years ago are over now. It is strange to reflect that I saw them and took part in them. But to go on with my story.

The first half of the road was plain sailing; it was when I got into unfamiliar land that I began to worry. I was riding through fairly open country, all gently rolling in little hills with brooks between them, and little thick clumps of timber and patches of bramble and bog The sun was hot, and Peter kicked up the mosquitoes till my neck, in spite of the hog fat rubbed upon it, was swollen and maddening Towards four o'clock in the afternoon, as I broke out from cover on to a roll of savannah land, I saw smoke among a patch of timber ahead, and that made me draw away to the shelter of a clump till I could see what kind of smoke it was. I knew that if the Indians or the "bad men" were raid-

ing I was in a tightish place. I was out there in the wilds, on a tired old nag, as fat as butter from summer grass, twenty miles from the nearest known shelter. I hitched Peter to a tree and tied a neckcloth over his mouth, so that he shouldn't squeal if any one approached him. Then I loaded my pistol in both barrels, with two bullets in each, and began to crawl forward under cover towards the clump whence the smoke rose. I was puzzled by the smoke, for it was daylight and hot weather. It might be a camp-fire carelessly left alight by travellers; but that was unlikely, as most travellers were too much afraid of setting the woods on fire to leave anything burning when they broke camp. It might be a woodsman boucanning, or "drying" his kill of beef or venison over a fire: but even that was unlikely in a land where savage Indians still raided in war parties. I crept away cautiously towards it, with my heart in my mouth whenever a bird gave an alarm cry.

Soon I came to the border of my clump. To get to the clump where the smoke rose I should have to wriggle through fifty yards of bramble and long grass, a risky business at the best, for a man unused to the work shakes the grass so badly, besides stirring up every snake and mosquito in his path. However, though I hated the thought of the journey, I felt that it had to be done. I watched the birds in the smoky clump. They seemed quiet enough. So, with a gulp in my throat, I pushed forward through the grass. I went

most cautiously, looking sharp ahead, in continual fear of putting my hand on a rattlesnake. The birds in the tree-tops twittered and chirped reassuringly; but I was conscious of making a swathe in the grass big enough for a carriage drive. The mosquitoes settled on me in swarms, but I dared not lift a hand to them. As I crawled I kept praying that no Indian was watching me, ready to shoot me directly I raised my head. I got through twenty yards, then thirty, then forty, without once peeping up above the grass tops. At my fortieth yard I stopped dead, full of horror, for in a tangle in front of me some one was singing a little quiet song, that was low like laughter, and every now and again louder. It was an Indian voice, but that was not the worst of it. It was a madman's voice. Somewhere in the grass beyond me a mad Indian was laughing and singing to himself. I gave myself up for lost, but I knew that to turn back or to lie still would be worse than to go forward. The sweat of terror was dripping off me on to my hands. I had my pistol wavering about like a conductor's baton.

I do not think that I could have turned. Great terror sometimes lures one forward, just as a little scare will set you scampering. I was not brave about it. Only I had the feeling that I ought to face it. It was partly the feeling that it would be terrible to be run down by a mad Indian, after a rush through the long grass with the war-whoop ringing out behind me. So

I pushed forward one length, then another, then a third, till I was peering through the grass stalks at something which lay beyond, in a dip of the land. Now, directly I looked through the grass clump, I saw that my mad Indian was nothing but a chuckling spring, which gurgled out of a pool, over a few pebbles, and away into a marshy tract, intensely green, where the mud turtles would have been happy. But although my Indian was gone, there was something disquieting instead of him. There was a dead wild steer lying beyond the pool, about twenty yards from me. Two men, with their backs towards me, were bent over his body, stripping off the hide. There was nothing in that, you will say, to disquiet any one. Perhaps not. But one of these men was dressed in a strange outlandish way, with a turban and sash, while the other wore Spanish clothes, very rich with silver. I knew from the clothes that the men were not planters. Since they were not planters, I argued that they were men to be avoided. They could either be the "bad men" (the renegade slaves who had taken to the woods to live, like the Indians, by hunting and by raids upon the settlers), in which case I was as good as dead; or they could be the smugglers hunting for beef. The smugglers I knew would not be likely to kill me, but I knew that they might seize me and sell me into slavery. They were good friends with the settlers; that was all very well, the settlers bought the goods from them. But a settler's slave was a no-account

person, with neither money nor friends; and these rough hulking villains, as I knew only too well, would steal a man's slave in order to sell him elsewhere, just as readily as they would chew tobacco.

Presently the Spanish-looking man, tired of stooping, dropped his knife and stood up to stretch himself. He yawned and turned round, so that I could see the ear-rings in both his ears. For a few seconds he looked straight at me; but as I was a little above him and well covered, he could not see me. I told myself that he could not see my track in the grass behind me. I took a careful aim at him, and waited, while my heart thumped upon my throat with great pants.

After a short rest, and the biting off of a fresh quid of tobacco, the man picked up his knife and went on with his work. I wanted to see his companion's face, but as he was bent over the beef I could not. I noticed that, whoever these people were, they were very well used to taking the hide off a cow. Presently the brush of the thicket beyond them was thrust aside, and out came half a dozen other men They were all rather richly dressed, like this first man, but they had the gait and look of seamen. Two of them were negroes, two were swarthy, olive-coloured, stockily-built men (these I took to be Spaniards). The others, though darkly dressed, looked like Englishmen. An Indian in English dress came after them at some little distance, carrying a long scalp-lock, such as so many of the woodsmen wore.

I pressed myself into the grass while they came forward. I had not much hope of escaping observation; but I realized that the stream kept them from walking into my hiding-place. Still I could not make out what they were. They were not the "bad men" of the woods, for the bad men wore clothes suited for woodland life; they were not Indians, they were apparently sailors. If they were sailors, come for fresh meat, then they could be nothing but smugglers, which is as much as to say pirates. Such people would probably be without horses, and if so, I argued to myself, I could get away on Peter. I prayed that they might soon turn back to the copse, so that I could go back to my horse.

Instead of that they gathered unconcernedly about the cow, drew out their machetes or long knives, and fell to at the flaying and quartering. The man in the turban produced a ball of spunyarn, with which they made handles or straps for the joints of meat as they hacked them off. Another man, flinging out the hide towards me, just as a housewife flings down a doormat, gave it a last scrape before folding it and putting it on his head. They were talking to each other all this while, partly in Spanish. As far as I could make out, the man in the turban was a sort of officer among them.

After a few minutes of talk, during which they lit their pipes, they shouldered the meat, and began to walk slowly away from me towards the trees. There was something about the walk of the turbaned man which

seemed familiar, but I could not remember where I had seen anything like it. I remembered that it seemed uncanny to me. It was as though I had been through all this long before in a nightmare, and that now it was come true.

The Indian remained behind longer than the others to take the cow's tongue, which had been forgotten. I kept breathlessly still while he did this, for I had heard terrible tales of the sharpness of an Indian's senses. My heart thumped horribly. I felt so sure that the Indian would see me through the tall stalks of the grass. My legs were numbed with long lying cramped. My arms ached intolerably. I had the Indian covered. My fingers were pressing on the trigger. My plan was to shoot the Indian and run for it, if he caught sight of me. At every second his friends drew nearer to the thicket. In ten steps more they would be hidden from me. The chance of escape became almost a certainty. Even now, if I had to kill this man and run, I felt that I could win to the further cover before they could open fire with any chance of hitting me. If I could win to the cover unhurt, I made sure of getting away on Peter, who by this time would be well rested. At this moment the Indian straightened himself, hitched the scalp under his belt as a sailor hitches ropeyarn, and looked out over the countryside under the sharp of his hand. He was a fine, straight, splendidly built man, with a broad brown face and cheeks suffused with scarlet. I have seldom

seen a grander man. He must have been six feet six in height. His intensity of gaze, the sharpness of the hooked nose, and the immobility of his figure as he looked, made me think him a great human eagle. All the faculties of his nature were concentrated on his examination of the land. His face was without other expression than that of merciless scrutiny. I understood by looking at him how the hawk looks and feels when he poises above a field for mice. When he stood up his left side was turned to me, he was looking due west. To his right side lay the copse to which his friends were walking. He did not look in that direction. He slowly turned round towards me, scanning the whole countryside, as he had learned in his childhood, before he had taken up with the whites. Slowly he turned, till he was looking straight over my head, along my track in the grass. I was gazing, as it seemed, right into his eyes, and yet no hint of having seen me showed in his face. He had not seen me. His gaze had a raptness in it, as though he were in some dream of the long ago, when perhaps he had hunted and camped among these woods with the braves of his tribe. He turned at last, without a sound, and began to walk swiftly towards the copse, though in a track rather to the right of those followed by his friends. I knew then that he was following a rule of the Red men, who never return by the track by which they come. Still I dared not stir. He would have heard me had I moved. I watched his

feet moving softly and swiftly in the grass. Suddenly, even while I watched, the man disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him. I could not believe my eyes. He had gone. There was no marshy patch near, he had not fallen into a slough. He had vanished in some shortish grass not tall enough to hide a child. I watched for a full minute, trying to see what had happened to him, but I could see nothing: he had vanished. From somewhere in the copse the laugh of a startled woodpecker clattered. Just beneath me some of the cow's corpse fell over on its side with a dull flop. I had had enough of that place. I swung round gingerly, and began to crawl away with a mighty sick feeling in my heart lest the cow's carcass should come crawling after me, with fumbling hops. I did not intend to break a new track in the grass. I was going to get back to Peter just as quickly as I could.

Now there is a great deal of difference between facing an enemy and running from him. When you face him, however sick at heart you may be, you have the worst before you, and know when it is going to strike. When you run from him you imagine the worst, and that is much more terrible. So it was with me now. I had not gone ten yards before my fear of being taken by these men took hold of me and shook me. I stood up, wheeling round to see if any one really was coming after me: and, after one startled glance behind me, I ran down my track to cover like a bull running from

a fire. At the same instant a big man, riding on Peter, burst through the cover before me without seeing me, and a voice shouted "Coje usted" from somewhere behind me. Something whistled over my head, and jerked round my throat with a rattling knock upon my nose I felt myself spun round from behind. I could just see the figure of the Indian rising up out of the grass at my back within seven yards of me, and had time to fire at him blindly before I was flung heavily to the ground. As I fell, my second barrel went off into the air.

I realized that I had been lazoed; that I must draw my knife at once. I was not so flurried that I could not think. I was groping for my knife to cut the rope when the Indian swooped down on me. He flung a rope about me as swiftly as a spider spins round a wasp. He lashed me up, as one lashes a hammock, with marling turns, so that I could not move my arms. I was a helpless bundle before my knife was out of its sheath. Then the man who was riding on Peter rode up to have a look at me. He too was richly dressed, like the others. He was so big that his feet almost touched the ground. He was so fierce-looking that had he gone on all fours the cattle would have taken him for a panther. He had the flattened brow and the pale, evil eye of the panther. If he had been beautiful he would have been very like a panther.

"Que tal?" he said, staring at me in amaze-

ment. Then raising his voice, he hailed the rest of them. "Ahoya, mis amigos," he shouted. "Ahoya."

In about a minute I heard the feet of the others coming through the grass. I heard their voices. One voice was saying, in English, that Hunko had roped somebody. Another answered that it must be a bear, since nobody could be within miles of them. I did not see them at once. I was on the ground, staring up at Hunko, who looked at me with something in his face like—I will not call it pity or sympathy, but interest. I fancy he thought that I was a game young cock to have fired at such a great brave as himself.

Other faces stared down at me. They formed a ring about me, puzzled at my sudden appearance among them. "Ask Theo," said one of them. "Come and look, Theo," said another. The man in the turban shouldered through the group and looked at me. He was tanned to a yellowy brown like the rest of us. The queer whitish-brown clothes which he wore made him look like a sort of Hindu. But it was Little Theo. I should have known him had he been dressed in woad. He was older and wilder looking, that was the only difference. I, who had grown a great deal in every way since our last meeting, was not so easy to recognize. My first impulse was to cry out, "Why, it's Little Theo." Then I remembered that he was a master, and that I must be respectful. It was queer that I should think of that at such a time.

IX.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Mora?" I asked.

"Why, it's Charles Harding," he said. "Yes, of course. Let him up, Hunko. Well, Charles Harding, and what is the present subjunctive of *aimer*?"

Hunko let me up, and I rose and shook his hand. I think that that moment made up for pretty nearly all the miseries of the past. Here was my old friend to talk and consult with; here was the old life come back.

"But what brought you here, sir?" I said.

"Why," he answered, "that's a long tale for one time. But come along; I'll tell you as we go. Pick up your meat, boys, and shove ahead."

"Bueno!" "Muy bien!" "Un amigo!" "Met in the old country!" said the others, as they turned. One of them, a rough-looking Englishman, asked me whether I had any objection to letting my horse "toat" the meat. They did not wait for my permission, but slung the joints upon Peter. One of them led the old horse when we set out together, in an easterly direction, towards the Atlantic coast.

Little Theo did not speak to me for some time. As we walked on together I had leisure to observe him. I did this shyly, for I had not been able to overcome my awe of him. One would have thought that his presence there among the pirates, dressed like a Hindu, would have removed all suggestion of a master from him. It

was not so. He was in command of these men; and then he had always a dignity about him which made people stand off until they were invited to approach. What I remarked about him was a certain wildness and strangeness of manner which I had never before noticed in him. I put it down to the sufferings through which he must have passed; but it gave me uneasiness. I could not help thinking that his brain was turning. Something in his eye made me think that.

"Charles," he said at last, "are you still a slave?"

"Yes, sir," I answered; "I shall be a slave for four years more."

"And then you will plant tobacco, I suppose?"

"If I can't get home somehow. But I can't get home without money."

"Cannot you escape from your master?"

"If I were to run away I should only get among pirates or bad men And if I were caught, I should be flogged, and then branded in the face"

"Would you care to come with me? I am navigator in a smuggling ship. I am in a gang of smugglers. That is to say, they are not so much smugglers as pirates. They are really privateers, who come here to sell their booty"

"Oh, sir," I said, with a sinking heart.

"Not from my own choice," he said, smiling at my trouble "I am here by necessity, like yourself. And do not judge them too harshly: they saved my life.

Come with me. We shall keep each other company. I shall be able to look after you."

"But what shall I become, sir?"

"You needn't become a pirate," he answered, smiling. "I'll see to that. But if you are away from this life, going about the world, you will at least have more chance of getting home. I'm just as anxious to reach home as you are."

"Isn't it a frightful risk, sir, smuggling?" I asked. I had been a slave for two years, and something of the slave soul was in me. "There's a frigate on the coast. And if I were caught I should be branded."

"We are going to Jamaica," he answered. "In Jamaica there may be ships going to England, if we want to go to England. I am a navigator, and there is always a demand for navigators. I could get you in with me perhaps."

My heart leapt at the prospect of getting to England; but even so, I was afraid of this going with the pirates, and terribly afraid of running from Carteret. I had known one or two poor men who had run from their masters, and been taken. They had been tied up to a tree and beaten with thongs, and then branded like heifers with red-hot irons, so that for all their lives to come people would shrink from them. Then there came the thought that if I went I should be with a friend who would save me from this; and again the thought of England came, overwhelming me. England had been

a want gnawing at my heart for all these months. She had been something glorious, very far away—something longed for, but impossible. It had been a horror to me to think that I might die without revisiting England.

"Yes, you must certainly come," said Little Theo calmly. "That is evidently the rightest thing."

"But how about Peter?" I asked. "He belongs to my master. He would think that I had stolen him."

X.

Before Theo could answer, the Indian Hunko, who had been walking a little ahead of the group, stopped and held up a hand. We all stopped, and looked about us. We were close to a pretty big copse or thicket, which shut us in from the west. When we stopped I thought that the Indian had caught the scent of wild cattle. The others thought so too. They drew their pistols, and began to edge noiselessly into line.

"What is it, Hunko?" said Theo, in a very low voice. "Is it beef?"

The Indian listened intently, and then with a swift gesture said, "Abajo. Down," in his guttural Spanish. At that instant Peter, looking up and pawing forward a step or two, whinnied loudly at something unseen, evidently at some little distance. The Indian sank down into the grass and disappeared, as he had dis-

appeared before when he had first caught sight of me. I don't know how they do it. They begin to learn when they are tiny. It is partly natural to them, of course, from long generations of practice, but it is wonderful all the same. It shows such absolute power of the will over the motions of the muscles and such subordination of the person to the intention. We others dropped down too, like men used to frontier life. A negro near me lifted his head and whispered, "Dos caballos" (Two horses).

Laying my ear to the ground, in the Indian way, I caught the drumming of hoofs upon the savannah. The panther-man, nudging the man next to him, asked for the loan of a ramrod. The minutes passed heavily; I thought that the end would never come. Suddenly from over the copse end came the high, wild, melancholy crying of a wolf. I had heard the noise often enough, but the clear dying-away anguish of it had never thrilled me so before. Little Theo, lifting his head, answered the call cleverly, but in a way which would not have deceived me had I been out in the wilds. I knew the cries of the savage creatures as well as they knew them themselves. An instant afterwards the drumming of the horsehoofs stopped, and a long wailing wolf-call, evidently the work of a human throat, came from the savannah.

"Es Restituto," said one of the men.

"No," said another.

"It is Dick and Giles."

The pirates stood up again The Indian was back among us, merely remarking "Amigos," as he knocked the dust from his robes and took a look along the horizon Then came hails, shouts (both rather anxious, I thought), and the straining noise of harness-leather as the horses galloped up. The horses had been cruelly ridden, and that showed me that the riders, whoever they were, were in some desperate panic, besides being ignorant of the ways of us woodsmen, who know how to ride a horse all day, at a good steady lope, without breaking his heart. The men swung themselves off their horses clumsily. They were pretty stiff and sore from the gallop, having ridden little probably for some years.

One of them was a heavy lout of a man, with a brutish face. The other was of a different type. He had a bright, intelligent face, with frank eyes. The only want in his look was a certain easy-going looseness about his mouth. One felt that here was a good companion, without the means of judging whether others were worthy companions. This one advanced towards us, letting the other hold the horses. He had a face full of trouble, which made me wonder for the moment whether the Indians were up.

"See here, mister," he said to Little Theo "Listen, you others; come round here"

"What is it, Dick? Give her sheet," said the others.

"About Captain Pointer," said Dick. "He's left us. He's taken the pick of the crew and left us."

"Left the ship?" said Little Theo. "Or left us without the ship?"

"Left the ship," said Dick.

"Oh," said Little Theo calmly. "Gone away? And who has gone with him?"

"Twenty-five, all told," said Dick. "All he could take, in fact."

"Really," said Little Theo. "But I don't understand. Why has he gone?"

"Well," said Dick, "I leave that to you, mister."

"But why?" Little Theo asked.

"It was something to do with you, mister," said Dick—"something about Boca Drago—the island where we found you. He said there was a mystery somewhere."

"Has he gone to Boca Drago, then?"

"Restituto said that that was the plan, as far as he could make out. He had malaria bad, Restituto. He was turned in, and heard them talking about it."

"Heard who talking about it?"

"Captain Pointer and the others. You see, Cap, there was some young sparks came into the creek with one of those turtle-schooners, the *Lone Fortune*. We were in Charlestown with her, if you remember. Captain Pointer was very thick with the young sparks aboard her."

"Yes, I remember. And so he has gone with them. Why?"

"She was a swift little ship," said Dick musingly; "and I gather that the game was to get to the island

in a hurry. You see, Cap, begging your pardon, it was all fixed up between them. Captain Pointer suspected there was treasure in that island. When you had the fever aboard us you talked a lot about gold. There was a lot of gold, you kept saying—a golden church or something. You know the truth of that, better than I do."

"Well?"

"So Captain Pointer got you away beef-hunting here, and examined some papers you had—a book and that. Restituto says that it was a picture book, and that it said where the gold was."

"Well?"

"Well, that's all, Cap. He thought he'd go raise the gold."

"And why didn't you go?"

"Why," said Dick promptly, "I've a mournful passion for the beauty of your mug, Cap. So I stayed. Besides, Doggy Sam sent me out with some of the others to truck for cider. I didn't know anything about it till they had gone. They sailed yesterday evening before sunset."

Here one of the men broke in to say that if there really were gold in the island, we could go in chase, beat them, get there before them, and lift the gold for ourselves. That was the plain sense of it, he said.

"Yes," said Dick. "But Captain Pointer thought of that. He took our sails with him, and most of our grub, as well as the boat and anchors. It won't be so easy to go after him. Besides, the ship's a wreck anyway."

"Ah," said Little Theo, in a strange voice. "Well, let us get on board, and see what may be done."

"Begging your pardon, mister," said Dick. "The hands want me to say that they hope you won't leave us. You're the only one of us who can navigate. We should be in a mess if you were to leave us too." He looked hard at Theo's face to see whether there were any signs of compliance. It was an expressionless face at the moment, but a good deal paler than it had been. It was pale, as I thought, from anxiety, and from a determination not to be anxious. What all this talk of the island and gold might be I could not imagine. I only said to myself that Little Theo's going on the "grand tour" had led to more adventures than had come to me. I had a sense, too, that they had coarsened and hardened him. He looked and spoke like a very different man from the fine young man who had bought a new wig that day at Deptford.

"You'll remember, mister," said Dick pleadingly, "that it was us who brought you off that island."

"I remember," said Theo. "Tell me. Did Captain Pointer send word to the Sheriff about us?"

"My hat, mister," said Dick. "I never thought of that. I don't know, Cap. Very likely he done."

"What?" said one or two of the others. "Peach on us? Give us away to the Sheriff?"

"Nothing more likely," said Theo. "We must get out of here. The first thing to do is to get on board,

and see what we can do." He turned to me, and shoved me towards Dick by the scruff of my neck.

"Here, Don Ricardo," he said. "This is our new recruit. This was a friend of mine in the old country. I'm going to take him home."

"Right," said Dick, shaking hands with me. "Now we'd better shove ahead, pronto. And as for you, my son, you shall be an admiral." I did not want to be an admiral (of that kind), for I hated the sea and everything in it, and the kind of life produced by it; but I thought to myself that Little Theo was the captain of these men, and in command of a ship, and that England was distant only a month's sail, four weeks, twenty-eight days, or less if the wind held. Some scruples about Peter, and old Carteret's sore leg, still held me.

"Please, Mr. Mora," I said, "my master's leg is bad."

"It will get better," he answered coldly.

"A lad of tender heart," said one of the Spaniards.

"Bueno," said the others, when my remarks had been translated to them. "Bueno joven." They looked at me as if I were some rare bird, as if goodness were stuck about me like feathers. Dick clapped me on the shoulder and took my arm. We struck the trail of the horses, and set off eastward to the ship. Hunko, riding forward, looked out for danger.

XI.

Towards dark we sat for a short while to rest; for the pace was telling on us. I was tired; but Dick told me that it was only a matter of another mile or so, so I bore up. As we were about to start again, Hunko the Indian, who had been looking out as we rested, held up a hand for silence, and signalled to Dick to cover the horses' mouths. He did so instantly, without waiting to ask why. Little Theo, crawling forward, asked in a whisper what the trouble was.

"War-party," said Hunko, "a war-party on a foray."

"Where?" said Little Theo.

The Indian pointed to a mound dimly to be seen half a mile ahead.

"Camped for the night, I reckon," said Dick. "There's a fire, and they wouldn't light a fire unless they were going home. I reckon we are cut off from the sea, captain. They're dead in our path."

"Yes," said Little Theo. "Creo que si. I would know what it is they want, and how many they are, and whether they have seen us. Hunko, you must go and see them."

"I've heard tell," said Giles slowly, as Hunko crept away into the gloom, "that Injuns coming home from a raid split up into bunches."

"Yes," said Dick. "But if that gang see that we've got horses, they'll try to wrastle them, no matter how

small the bunch is. Now, there's a clump of hill there. Let's get up it, so as to have a bit of a position anyway. There's a brook running down at the foot there. One of us'll lay down and get our water bottles filled, and then we'll be ready for them."

Silently we crept away towards the little knoll, leading the horses. It rose up in the twilight like a small inverted bowl of earth, not more than a hundred feet high, and no bigger at the top than a tennis-court. I do not know what the other men thought. Probably they knew too little about Indians to realize their danger. But I, who had seen some of the Indian handiwork, felt the hair of my scalp tingling whenever I glanced back at the little red spark of fire, which died, and glowed out again, as the wind rose and fell. Some of the men, as we walked, said that they didn't think that the Indians could have seen us. But I knew better. There was not much chance of that. My only hope was that the Indian party might be too small to tackle us. Perhaps, after looking at us, they might decide that we had nothing which they really wanted. Otherwise, we could look to hear from them, not just yet, but in the cold, dreary, dark time a little before the dawn When we got to the little hill we found that it could be guarded easily enough, being steep to the top on all sides. By daylight it was likely to be dangerous, being open to the plain all round, so that any one on the hill would make a fair target to a marksman below him. For the time it

was a pretty good place, we all thought, though the camp would be cheerless enough, since we dared not light a camp-fire. There would be no moon. We were in for a night of anxious misery, with a very strong likelihood of violent death at daylight.

When we got to the hill-top we picketed and fed the horses, placing them in our midst, inside as much of a cordon as eight people can make about a tennis-court. When we had given them their feed (grass hastily cut with our knives), Dick suggested making a sort of ankle-high fence around our camp, with shrub-stakes and lazoes, but we had not rope enough to make the circuit, even with our stirrup-leathers and reins, so this fell through. We were beginning to worry about Hunko, who had not reappeared among us, though it was now more than half an hour since he had crept away. In the general gloom which settled down upon us when the scheme of the trip-rope came to nothing, this fact of Hunko's absence told upon us heavily. We looked out anxiously towards the Indian camp, telling ourselves that it was not yet possible for him to be back among us, while all the time we knew in our hearts that he had been caught out there in the grass and done to death. The little sad spark of a camp-fire wavered and glowed up, marking the presence of our enemies, but there came no sign of Hunko. Suddenly Tomas, who had shown a good deal of terror during our retreat, broke out excitedly with,—

"Look, look. Their fire's out."

A second before I had noticed that red spark. Now it was quenched out utterly. I could see in my mind's eye the brown skinny hands dropping death upon it, at some smart alarm or signal.

"Now, boys, look out," said Dick. "They're probably coming. Out all your pistols, and load with chewed slugs."

After loading carefully we held a weapon show. We had nine possible fighters, including myself. For weapons, we had fifteen double-barrelled pistols, with perhaps ten rounds of ammunition for each. We had two light fowling-pieces, one heavy gun throwing an ounce ball and three axes. Each man had a long knife or dagger. Dick had a slung-shot and a pair of brass knuckles, of which he was very proud, though I knew that an Indian at close quarters would give him little chance of using either. Altogether, we could reckon on a pretty effective armoury. Dick, who seemed to have more wit than the others, produced some parchment and began to make pistol cartridges by the light of a candle hidden behind a small wall of scratched-up earth. I helped him at this work, for I was clever at cartridge-making, having made all Carteret's cartridges during the last two years. When we had rolled up some three or four rounds for each man, our candle burnt itself out into a little pool of grease We served out the cartridges to our party. Then Little Theo told us off to our stations round the

hill-top; two men to each quarter of the compass. I, being a supernumerary, was put to the east, with Bill and Tomas, our two worst men. I noticed that an Englishman was put by each of the Spaniards. The Spaniards were not allowed together. As we went quietly to our quarters, an owl hooted somewhere down in the plain. Far away to the south another owl answered faintly. The first owl replied from somewhere a little nearer. It was not quite an ordinary hoot. There was something unusual in the fading of the cadence. Perhaps one who had not lived in the woods would not have noticed it.

"They are coming," I whispered to Dick.

"Sure thing," he answered. "They are, and here we are without any water, either for ourselves or for the horses. Theo," he cried, raising his voice, "we've got no water. Some one's got to get water; we may be held up here all day to-morrow, and then there are the horses."

"Turn the horses loose," said Tomas; "they earn't ours. I'm not going to bother about horses which aren't mine. Let them go free, Don Ricardo."

"No, señor," said Dick. "I guess that no, my Spanyola de Guzzlevino; I guess that no. Them plugs'll be the salvation of any of us that gets wounded. I'm going to treat them horses like I'd treat my best friends. One of us is going to get water, not only for us, but for the horses too."

At this there was some babblement among the men,

who one and all vowed that they would not leave the camp, "seeing as one man short might mean the death of the lot of us." One of the Spaniards, the one called Benito, said that he would go down to the brook with the water-bags and bottles, if Dick, our best shot, would come with him to stand guard as he filled them. To this Little Theo objected.

"Our brave Benito shall go," he said caressingly in Spanish. "But our most gallant Ricardo, he is our hope. What could we do with the ship without Ricardo and myself? He is our trust. He shall not leave the camp. He shall stay. The so-valiant and lion-like Don Tomas shall go with our brave Benito"

However, this proposition damped Benito's ardour altogether. I cannot say that it pleased the lion-like Don Tomas. "No, captain," he said. "It is well known that the savages are very subtle. I am for the open fighting. My genius does not suit for this warring of wild beasts. I am a gentleman. I will fight like a gentleman. Is it not so? Then bueno, for it is so."

"Bueno," said everybody. "Tomas tiene razon. Bueno. Muy bien, Tomas."

"Bueno up an alley," said Dick. "One of you has got to go, or I'll go myself."

But to this they all opposed themselves violently, saying that it was impossible, not to be thought of; the brave Ricardo was not to be foolhardy. They made noise enough to scare every living thing for a quarter of

a mile. If the Indians had come upon us then, they could have cut our throats before we could have fired a shot. I, who knew something of the Indians' habits, was aghast at them. There was only one way of stopping them, a dangerous way certainly, but less dangerous than allowing them to continue this noise. I stepped back among the horses to collect the canvas water-bags and the men's canteens. Slinging them over my back, I called out to them to get to their posts, since I would go for the water alone. I asked that I might have two more pistols, in case I should be attacked; and I prayed that they would not fire at me, even if I came home by another path than that by which I went. I would give them a miaou, by way of signal, when I came within range. They applaudeed me heartily for my valour. Little Theo, preparing to come with me, was stopped by the others, who would not hear of their navigator risking their lives by risking his own. Dick gave me his pistols, and told me that I was a plucky lad. Benito, who had shown a good courage all along, offered to come with me, but this I refused. I was a silent walker myself. Benito was anything but that. I would go alone, and take my chance.

"Bueno," said everybody. "He like to go alone, so that there shall be no noise. Bueno. Que valor. Que intelligencia."

To a running chorus of "Buenos" I stepped over the brow of the hill, on my way to the brook.

XII.

For a moment I stood still, peering through a black darkness in which I could barely see the nearest clump of trees, a good quarter of a mile away. I was conscious of the stars being blotted out in that part, but hardly of the presence of the wood. It was as dark a night as I could remember. The brook was easily seen, for a faint, whitish, fine-weather mist had begun to wreathe along its course. The brook was no difficulty, but the getting to the brook was likely to tax my powers. To get to it I had to creep silently for three hundred yards over unknown country, some of it perhaps brambly, some almost certainly quaggy. Like all boys brought up in the woods I had observed the country pretty closely when I first came into it. It had become almost second nature to me to do so. I had particularly noticed the course of the brook, because brooks and the strange wild things which live in them have always fascinated me. I knew that it ran towards the sea in a straight line from the south of our camp to the south of the Indians' camp, which was dead to the westward of me. But further up the stream, a little to the east of our camp, before the brook began that straight westerly course towards the sea, it made a wide sweeping curve north and south, so as to put our camp, as it were, in the crook of an elbow. I could go to the water from any point between south and east. Standing on

the hillside, out of sight of my companions, with the certainty that somewhere in the blackness were deadly and cruel enemies creeping towards me through the grass, I tried to remember, from my observations an hour before, whereabouts the brook's banks had been sedgy. I had no very clear remembrance; but I expected, from what I knew of brooks, that the firm banks and deep water would be away from the bend. Before I set off I laid my ear to the ground, hoping that I might hear some stealthy footsteps or distant snapping twig. But I heard only the passing drumming note of the brook going over a fall three hundred yards away. As I stopped to listen, the call of the owl sounded out from below, by the water.

There was nothing for it but to bear off to the eastward. I guessed from the owl-calls that the Indians were almost all round us by this time. To get to the brook and back unobserved would be impossible; but it was craft against craft: I meant to try. As I glided away softly I was conscious that the water bottles were making a great noise upon my back. It was unpleasant to think that they would probably be noisier still when full. The putting down of each foot was a matter of infinite delicacy. Have you ever thought of the way a deer goes in lands where there are beasts of prey? It was like that that I crept down to the water, fearfully, peering, sniffing, treading delicately, lest a twig should snap or a puddle splash or a briar rustle. As I went on

I gained confidence, for I thought that the night was black enough to puzzle even an Indian. Then, in a careless moment, I trod on a dry branch, and snapped it across with a noise which rang out like a pistol-shot. An instant later, about a hundred yards to my right, the owl-call sounded again, with that blood-curdling melancholy unreality which makes the owl's cry so terrible. It startled me from all my woodcraft. Panic took me. I waited for nothing more. I charged down to the brook at full speed, floundered across it at the bend where it was more than knee deep, and then followed it northward at full speed on the further side till I was out of breath. Then I lay down gasping, while my heart knocked at my throat, till I had pulled myself together. After a few minutes I peered across through the alders at the distant camp, which I could just see as a black mass hiding the western stars. All was quiet there. All seemed quiet in the grass land at its foot, but it was a quiet more ominous than that stillness frequently disturbed to which a woodsman is accustomed. In the wilds, at night, there is always noise—quick stealthy noises, little squeaks and cries, as though mice were giggling; little swift patterings of dew, knocked off by an unseen, noiseless walker; little scuffles, little sudden pouncings—noise enough to tell a woodsman of another world than his, filling the night with life. To-night this babble of small sounds was hushed unaccountably. There were strange beasts of prey abroad—strange, dim,

silent, grey things slinking into the grass like wolves, gliding forward like snakes, frightening all the wild things from their hurried, startled hour of feeding. Of all the bad signs visible to me, that sign of the silence was the most appalling. All the night seemed to brood and to be expectant. It was all hushed, as in the moment before a cyclone strikes. It needed very little—a broken twig or the noise of a cocked lock—to let loose those tense-drawn nerves in the camp and around it.

Peering forward into the gloom I began to people the night with my fancies. I began to suspect the presence of Indians among the alders. That dim blackness of a leafy branch was surely a head. What was that moving in the grass there? Listen. It was all still, very still, a breathless night, tense with expectation. Far away (or was it near, though very low?) an owl hooted. After the calling of the owl a new terror walked the darkness. Heavy footsteps sounded at my back, then ceased, began again, and again ceased. Some one was coming up behind me. He was standing still, loading his arms. I could hear a strange noise as of a clicking gun-lock. I spun round, facing away from the brook, to front this unknown. But I could see nothing; nothing but mist, and the night's gloom. I stared into the dark for a glimpse of him. The heavy footsteps drew nearer with a resolute curiosity. There came a noise of a musket being grounded. The noise seemed to be within a few yards of me; but in the darkness,

made even darker by the shifting mist, now gone, now thick, who could tell whence it came? My fingers were ready on the trigger. Dimly, as in one volleying blast the mist drove by, hurried by a gust, I saw something black facing me—a bear, a man, or a willow-stump—something black in the night facing me. In moments of great excitement one realizes with a swift intense certainty. I saw this thing for perhaps five hasty seconds before the mist closed in again; but, even in those five seconds, I knew that it had seen me. As quickly as I could I shifted my position a few yards to my left, before the mist should clear again. The wind was rising now, the mist would be gone in an instant, it was going even now. Presently it blew away altogether, vaguely, into the blacker vagueness of the night, and there was the thing, crept a little nearer to me.

"Woof!" it snorted loudly, "woof!" There came a slashing noise, and the angry stamping of a hoof. The thing was a wild bull, the offspring of the cattle let loose in the Indian raids thirty years before. The woods hid several herds of them. I almost laughed with relief when the beast declared himself. A second later I decided that it was no laughing matter—for, in the first place, the beast's snort would have declared my whereabouts to every Indian within hearing; and in the second place, it was the early fall, a time when the animals are in prime condition, and very quarrelsome. "Woof!" he said again, stamping, and lashing with

his tail. His head went down jerkily. I knew that he was cutting the earth with his horns. It would never do to wait there till he charged me, so I backed most cautiously into the brook, which I crossed. I was glad to find the opposite bank a steep one. There was no chance of his crossing after me.

When I had hauled myself up on the bank I filled the water-bags and canteens as quietly as I could, taking care to fix the stoppers so that they should not be jerked out if I had to run. I had slung them over my shoulders, ready to start back to the camp, when the bull, having cut the turf with his horns till his courage was flaming in him, advanced to the brink of the bank and bellowed his challenge at me. In so much silence the uproar of that bellow was comforting; but the thought occurred, is it myself that he is challenging? may it not be some Indian looking for me? The bull challenged again more loudly, trampling at the brink as though for a ford. Then, wheeling round, he trotted downstream to shallow water, snorting loudly, galloping for a pace or two, pausing to rattle his horns on an alder branch, a creature of terrible strength. I knew that if he crossed the water I should have trouble with him, so with a bit of a prayer and a resolute gulping down of terror I began to creep forward to the camp. I remember saying to myself that my best plan would be to edge away to the right, away from the bull, before I tried to dash in towards my friends; but my nerves weren't

equal to the strain. I went forward, straight for home, to the most horrible instant of alarm of all that horrible night. I went so silently (I was proud of this afterwards) that I put my hand on to a sleeping hare in her form.

It was probably a severe shock to the hare; but to me, that sudden alarmed upstarting, that touch of the warm fur, that horrible swift charge away as though a living rocket were running in the grass, were most terrifying. Away she tore, in great leaping bounds, straight for the camp, thirty yards away. The scuttering thumping of her rush checked itself suddenly, as the creature bounded widely to one side. In her terror she had run almost on to something; and, swerving, she had made one of those side-leaps with which a hare confuses her trail. After her leap she turned and raced back past me, some twenty yards to my right. I knew the signs only too well. The something in the grass could not be a beast of prey, for there was no pursuit. There was an Indian right in front of me, between me and the camp, and he knew that I was there, thirty yards behind him: the hare's mad rush must have taught him.

Very cautiously, hardly daring to put my hand down again lest I should put it on an Indian, I glided away to the right, towards the track made by the hare in her double I knew that the terrible moment was about to happen; but, to tell the truth, the relief experienced by me in finding that the jumping thing was not an enemy was so great that I was no longer frightened—only very,

very curious and tense, as though every ounce of me, body and spirit, was playing this forlorn hand dealt to me by the fates. As I crept away I heard the old bull splashing across the shallows, trumpeting his challenge to everything on earth. I wondered whether he would give his attention to the Indians, or follow up-stream till he could find out what had happened to myself.

I crept on silently. I am quite sure that I was as silent as a human being can be. No one can move without making some noise. I did not make the mistake of pausing. A noise suddenly arrested is a suspicious noise. By keeping in motion, even if one makes a little noise, the noise becomes one of the earth's noises, it mingles with the noise of wind and water; it is difficult to distinguish. Presently I felt that I had gone far enough to the right. I felt myself free to go off straight towards the camp, which I could dimly make out a couple of hundred yards away. Now, indeed, my heart began to leap with the excitement of it all. I raised myself upon my knees, to rest my cracking muscles before starting on this last lap. If you wonder at my doing so, you should try for yourself to crawl on hands and knees through a field of tussock grass, with forty pounds of water on your back. After an instant's rest I crawled on again, over grass a little shorter than it had been below by the brook side, where the ground was rich with the flood drifts. I made ten yards, fifteen yards, seventeen yards. Then something in the grass

ahead, a dim bulk blocking my way, made me half pause till I could see what it was. You cannot think what a strain the darkness was. Everything was black, vague, ill-defined, full of menace. I could never be certain of anything, and I longed so to be certain. I said to myself, "I have been silent, but there is an Indian within twenty yards of me, as silent as myself. The black thing ahead is dangerous." What was the black thing? Was it a thicket of briars, or a patch of sumach, or an Indian grave-heap? I could not be sure; and it was necessary that I should be sure. I lay down flat upon the ground, so as to get its upper edge, if it had one, defined against the stars and the comparative lightness of the lower heaven. Looking at it thus, with my head flat upon the ground, I thought that it must be the bulk of a vast uprooted tree, probably much rotted and overgrown. That it was a tree was evident an instant later, when, in a puff of air, I caught the scent of wild honey from some crevice in its bark.

Now it was always my plan when alone in the woods to approach such places from the flank, never directly from the front. One never knows what may be in hiding on the further side. One may stir up a bee's nest, or a honey-hunting bear, or a wild-cat, if one approaches an old log too rashly, and none of the three is polite when disturbed. And as I looked at this log, with a knop or swelling in its surface well defined against a star, something very slowly rose up from behind it, gradually

hiding not only that star but several others. It rose up very slowly, so slowly that I knew that it could be no animal. As it rose it defined itself. Something stuck out from it at right angles. It was round, with something sticking out from it; it was something with eyes and a brain; it was looking at the ground where I lay. It was an Indian with eagle feathers in his hair. I got a sniff of his war grease intermixed with the perfume of the honey. For an instant we stared at each other through the darkness. We were not five yards from each other. If we had made "long arms" we might almost have touched. What was I to do now? Did he see me or did he not see me; and if he saw me, what was he going to do; and if he did not see me, how was I to get past the log while he was there? Did he see me? I concluded that he could not help it, since my face, in spite of my tan, was pretty white against the ground. But if he saw me he made no least sign, no least noise. He was like some great fungus thrust up suddenly from the log. He had the best cards: it was for him to call the game.

At that instant, with dreadful suddenness, the old bull challenged again furiously. The start of it was too much. It was as though the Indian had shouted. The sudden jog upon my nerves made me leap up I had my pistol in my hand. I flung it up swiftly, roughly levelled at the head. I fired one barrel at the head, and one a little lower down. The bullet scattered the bark

in all directions. Drawing a second pistol I fired one barrel of that in the same direction, though the head had now disappeared. I was not cool about it. My nerves were all wild, like branches tossing in a storm. Running round the log, I fired my fourth barrel at a blind random, downwards. After that I dropped down, listening intently for some noise; but the night was still again save for the bull, who, after roaring, was plainly advancing with angry snorts towards me. Had I hit the Indian? I dared not go to see. He was quiet as death, but I knew how cleverly an Indian would feign death to draw his enemy to him within reach of knife or tomahawk. I slipped more cartridges into the pistols, and wadded them down with some corn-pone saved from my dinner. The quiet of the Indians was terrifying. Why did they not raise their war-whoop and charge in? Perhaps, I reasoned, they were afraid of the bull. They were right to be afraid of him. An angry wild bull, as swift as a horse, and fiercer than fifty wild-cats, is a very terrible creature. Almost as my mind framed the words the bull loomed up against the stars, seeking for his enemy. He saw me, but was not sure of me. I looked very queer hunched up there on the grass. "Woof!" he snorted, sidling towards the Indian Then he paused, and seemed to test the air all round Some taint of the war-grease had reached him. He was puzzled. Then he came slowly towards me, lowering and tossing his head, while I kept very still,

knowing that as long as I kept quiet he would not charge. When he was within four yards of me he stopped, much puzzled in his mind. He snorted and thrust out his muzzle, stamping heavily. He took a pace towards me, and again stamped. I could stand it no longer. I sprang up with a yell, fired my pistol in his face, and struck his muzzle with my left hand. He wheeled about, terrified, and plunged away into the night, making a noise like a charge of cavalry. I yelled furiously to hearten him, and began a blind rush towards the camp, shouting at the top of my voice. When within twenty yards of the foot of the hillock I fired my pistols blindly into the night behind me. The next moment I was lying flat on my face, while the pirates blazed away in my direction with every weapon in the camp.

"Stop it!" I shouted; "stop it! I'm bringing the water."

In the noise of the firing they did not hear me. I could hear fresh guns coming into action. The bullets hummed past over my head. The wasteful fools were all there, leaving their rear and flanks unguarded. At last a lull came. I suppose they had fired off all their weapons, and had to pause to reload.

"Don't shoot!" I cried. "I've got the water for you."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Dick's voice. "We thought you were the enemy. Why in the world did you fire those shots just then? You scared us out of our wits."

"Why," I answered, "the place is crawling with Indians." (Here I scrambled into the camp with my load.) "And I've had a moving time bringing you this drink. I thought I was being pursued."

An owl cried from below, from the very place where I had lain a moment before.

"There," I cried, "there! That shows you."

Ramon, who had a loaded pistol, fired in the direction of the noise, wasting a good slug. We distinctly heard a grunting laugh from the hidden Indian. I took off my load of bottles, and lay down. I had only just been in time. After a moment's rest I roused myself, and charged my pistols.

"Dick," I called wearily, "if you don't guard all round the camp you'll get rushed. They're all round you" A moment later I was dead asleep, utterly exhausted. I did not wake till after midnight.

XIII.

I woke suddenly, as a woodman does, keenly alert. There was no firing, but something was in the air. It was that sense of impending danger which had woken me. I sat up to listen; there were low owl hootings, calling and answering, all about the camp. First a cry would come from the brook, then one would answer from the foot of the hillock, or half way up its side.

Then all would call together, making a melancholy music all round me, but all softly, so that I could not guess how many enemies there were. The pirates were on the alert, lying a little back from the crest's edge, ready to fire at anything which showed above it. Hunko had not returned: they had given him up for lost. Little Theo was walking from guard to guard, trying to keep his men calm under this ordeal of owl hooting. I felt somehow that the Indians meant to attack from the west, perhaps because that side was nearest to their camp. So I reinforced the western guard, lying rather far to their left to avoid being shot in the back by the eastern guard if a rush suddenly set us all shooting. I had seen enough of these fellows' discipline to know what to expect in case of an alarm. I still had Dick's pistols in my belt, and cartridges for seven or eight rounds. After I lay down the owl-hooting suddenly stopped, nor did it sound again for a full half-hour.

It was one o'clock, and more, when the next alarm came. We were waiting tensely, finding the strain very hard to bear, when a low owl-call sounded within ten yards of me—just over the crest of the hill, in fact. I saw that the men of my guard stirred anxiously, fingering their pistols, but they were not so mad as to advance towards the noise. An instant later there came a shattering war-whoop from behind me. Dick's voice called to us all to mind our own sides of the camp; but our nerves were too weak. We all faced round to the side

whence the war-whoop came. Dick cried out again to us to watch our own sides. He stole round the guards, and told us that if we were not plucky enough to stand to our posts, no matter what was happening behind us, we should all be dead by dawn, probably by our own bullets. For a few minutes after that nothing happened. Then suddenly, over the rim of the knoll, a mighty Indian sprang up in dim bulk directly in front of me. I saw him before he was on me, and fired instantly, missing him clean, I fancy. He disappeared into the night again as noiselessly as he had come.

"What was that you fired at?" said Dick calmly, to steady the nerves of the men.

"An Indian," I answered. "He showed for a second against the stars. I fired at him. I didn't go anywhere near him."

"All right," he replied: "don't worry. They're only worrying us—keeping us on the jump. Hold steady till they come, and then we'll plug 'em full of iron."

After another little time of waiting, one of the Englishmen on the southern, or windward, side called out that he smelt Indian war-grease. Dick told him to step back a little towards the horses. Then he called out to us all to step back nearer to the centre of the hill-top, so that we might keep from shooting each other in the backs in case of a *mêlée*. He saw that we were too much exposed as we were, and that our nerves were giving way under this process of annoyance. As we fell back

Little Theo fired two shots, but doubted afterwards whether he had fired at real men. Probably he had fired at something imaginary. We gathered comfortably together close to the companionable horses, and lay flat in a ring all about the picket pegs. Little Theo handed his plug of tobacco round the circle. The men took bites of it, and began to chew. We felt easier, all together like this. The man Ramon began to sing a little droning Spanish song to a tune which seemed to creep in and out, never quite declaring itself. He said that the song was about a soldier who wandered away among the mountains to kill a giant. It was an uncanny song. It droned along mysteriously, moving us all, till at last it seemed a part of the night, a part of nature itself. One could hardly think of life going on without that sleepy music; it seemed to have been playing ever since I was a child. I remember thinking that all this watching for Indians must be a dream; this music made it so unreal.

The owls began to call again, circling all round the hill, from owl to owl, till one felt sure that there were fifty of them. Then the hooting turned to the frightful, shattering war-whooping which had given me such a start an hour before. We huddled a little closer at this, so as to feel our neighbours. If you have neither heard that noise nor the crying of wolves, you will never guess how dreadful a noise it was to us on that lonely little hill in the dark. It lasted, without an interval, till the

night rang with it: then stopped as suddenly as it had begun, so that a brave, standing up on the very crest of the hill opposite Don Tomas, might shout a defiance at us. Then, after a triumphant yelling, it slowly died down to a muttering noise, like the noise of many people talking together. It was at this moment, when we were feeling that the immediate danger was over, that an Indian brave, possibly a young man eager for glory, rushed in upon us suddenly with a dozen leaping strides. He came over the hill-top like a panther, and in two seconds he was lashing out at us with a tomahawk, right in our midst, while we were firing at him from all the points of the compass. If we had been sitting up, or standing, he would have killed one or two of us. As it was he knocked Don Tomas senseless, and wrenched one of his pistols from him. I doubt very much whether he was hurt by our firing. He drew our fire effectively, gave us all a terrible impression of his strength and daring, and vanished with his trophy. We heard him singing a sort of triumphant song about it, somewhere down the slope of the hill. After this we saw no more of the enemy until a little before the dawn, when the horses became so uneasy that we feared that a rush was coming. The uneasiness of the horses was easily explained. The Indians had crept up to windward with a fresh bearskin, or fresh buffalo robe, so that the wild scent might waft into the camp. Horses cannot abide the scent of bear and buffalo. The Indians knew that

if they made our horses kicking mad, we should be forced to stand away from them in open order; and that their attack would be more certainly successful if they could catch us scattered into little groups divided by wild horses. The horses were soon plunging at their picket ropes with great wrenchings. They were sweating and trampling, trying to break away. A dim light was beginning to gather now in the east. The blackness of the night was gone. We could see the edge of the hill now, and each other's faces, and something of the lie of the land, in dark masses far away. We had just drawn away from the horses, fearing to be kicked, when the war-whoops burst out all round us, and a wedge of Indians stormed in upon our weather side. As our guns opened on them a volley was fired at us from the western end of the hill-top. Somebody stumbled into me, and fell among the horses. Then came shouts, cries, and a smart cracking of pistols. Peter, breaking his hobbles, knocked me down and galloped away. I saw an Indian bounding towards me. I fired at him, but still he came on; I fired again, everybody seemed to fire again, still he came on: it all happened in five seconds. I got my second pistol and fired, but still he came on. He seemed like a jumping figure in a zoetrope. There was a racket all round me as of the earth being blown to pieces. Ramon was ramming in a wad, shouting wildly in Spanish. I heard a groan, and Ramon was gone from my side. The Indian was right into me. Something struck

me in my face, knocking off my hat. A frightful explosion came from behind me, burning my neck and chin. The Indian in his rush flung me aside, and fired over me at some one who was firing at him. Then, when I got to my feet again, rubbing my neck, the Indians were gone from the hill-top; two of the horses were gone with them, the third lay dead among the water-bottles. Ramon was down with a smashed collar-bone. Tomas had a bullet in his chest. Bill had four slugs distributed about his body. Little Theo was cruelly cut about the shoulder. I had my neck burned by a pistol flash, and everybody had had a very lively scare. Apparently we had neither killed nor wounded a single Indian. It was a lesson to us not to brag about the superiority of the white man. I remember how glum we were when we found that all our shooting had been worse than useless. A shot was fired from the grass at the edge of the hill-top. Then another, from another quarter. Then a third and a fourth, till the air hummed with slugs. We fired at the flashes, but we soon found that we were only wasting powder. Giles got a bullet in his leg; Little Theo's neck was cut. We began to realize that in a little while, if this went on, we should be all put out of action before an Indian got a rap on the knuckles. Another shot came from the weather-side. It struck Dick's heavy gun on the barrel, broke the barrel across, and sent the iron with a whack on to my hand, so sharply that I feared for the bones of my fingers.

It was the last shot of the battle, as it happened: for directly afterwards there came a wailing yell from the plain, and the thunder of many galloping horses. The horses swept past us over the brook and away. Shots were fired from the west by the Indian camp. Owl cries rang querulously up and down the valley. They were repeated (apparently) by the Indians on the hill around us. Then we heard the owl-calls drawing further and further away from us in the direction towards which the horses had gone. Soon they left us quiet; but far away we could hear them crying on the plain where the horses still galloped, shaking the earth.

"They've gone," said Dick. "What's driven them off? What was that shooting in their camp? And what were all them plugs doing?"

Some thought that the Indians themselves had been attacked: others that they were making a feint to put us off our guard. I suggested that some wild beast or drove of wild horses had stampeded their horses at the camp, and that they had scattered to round them up. Some said one thing, some another. Day was now fast brightening over the plain; in a few minutes the sun would rise.

"I think I hear a hail," cried one of our wounded. "Listen, you."

"Captain," said Hunko's voice from a little below us, out of sight. "Tell your men not to fire"

"It is Hunko," cried two or three of the pirates. "Come forward, Hunko."

Hunko stepped gravely over the hill-crest, raising one hand to show us a long black Indian scalp-lock, the spoils of his night's roving.

"They are gone," he said coldly, pointing to the plain. "It was a party of eleven braves, and a few boys fit for war. They have been scared by the coming of settlers from Pike's Jetty. They have lost half their horses by stampede."

In the gathering light I could see a few mounted Indians trying to round up their runaways, now scattered far away over the plain. Westward, in their camp, about twenty mounted settlers were dividing the spoils of war, mostly of horses and arms. I was glad to see the settlers. I made sure that I should know some of them. I made up my mind that when we joined them I would appeal to them to save me from the pirates. Dick guessed my thoughts before I mentioned them.

"All very well, boy," he said, "but put it out of your mind. If these fellows hail us we are seamen, cruising for beef. You're one of us. We shan't speak to them more'n we can help. Little Theo isn't hunting for friends in these parts as cut. e going to rustle now for our ship."

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I had to be content ey had the whip-hand. Little Theo sent the boi iessage of thanks

to the settlers for their timely help, saying that he would come in person, were he less pressed for time. The sun was just rising clear of the horizon. I could see all round the hill where we had passed such a night of horror. There was the brook. There below me was the fallen hulk of the tree. Dick took me to see if there were any traces of the Indian behind the tree But there were none, except a little flattened grass. My shots had missed even at that short range. When I realized that I had run from the camp with an Indian so near to me, I felt truly thankful to have escaped with my scalp. My track was in the grass plainly enough. Here and there were marks made by the Indians; but it was strange to see so few traces in grass in which twenty big men had crawled and hidden for several hours together. Everybody to his own life and to his own way of fighting. I will never again despise a savage. His way of life is not the way which I should choose for mine, but it at least gives him virtues and qualities which my way does not give to me. I am a better man than the savage among my own people; but away from my own people, among his surroundings, he is better than myself. I escaped that night, I suppose, because the Indian disdained to kill a boy who had shown a certain amount of nerve, and the want of it.

When Hunko came back he came with three horses which he had borrowed for our wounded, some of whom were in a pretty bad way from loss of blood. We stuck

them up on the saddles with alder boughs to keep them upright. Tomas, Bill, and Little Theo had the horses. Ramon sometimes walked, and sometimes climbed up behind Tomas. We were not a very cheerful company on that last short stage which took us to the sea.

We pushed through a belt of thick timber into a stretch of land covered with sumach bushes. Scrambling down through this, we passed through a copse of scrub and brush to a rise of land, topped by three red cedars. Just below the rise was a creek of the sea, some two hundred yards across and about half a mile long. I thought at the time that I had never seen anything so beautiful as that quiet arm of the sea, trembling in its calmness under the morning sun. At the head of the creek was a settler's barn, a jetty of piles, a moored cat-boat, and a flag-pole flying Spanish colours. In the creek, fifty yards from the jetty (which showed how deep the creek was as clearly as the colour of the water), lay a small full-rigged ship under a jack. One or two men were lying about on her deck at breakfast. She had a dirty, old, dishevelled look, as of a ship falling to pieces: but I did not trouble much about her looks. I was to go back to the hateful life of the sea on board her. She was to be my prison; a college where I should learn vice; a temple where I should be consecrated to the gallows. I had long since ceased to expect to get back to my father in England; that was only a dull, gnawing want which I had no hope of satisfying. My

chief longing, when I found myself aboard that ship, *The Bachelor's Delight,* was to be on Peter again, riding across the wilds for the medicine. I thought tenderly of Carteret's shack. If Carteret's leg were not worse he would follow Peter's trail to find out what had happened to me. The trail would soon be confused and lost. News of the Indians' raid would be passed along, and Carteret would reckon that I had been snapped up by the raiders. Thinking over these probabilities, eager to make the most of them, I was forced to conclude that there was not much chance of rescue for me from that quarter.

There were not more than thirty-five hands all told on *The Bachelor's Delight.* They were mostly Spaniards, Frenchmen, mulattoes, and negroes; but there were three Indians and four Englishmen, counting myself. The ship was French. Almost the first thing noticed by me, as we pulled off to sea that morning, was her name in raised characters upon her transom:—

MARIE GALANTE, ST. NAZAIRE.

Underneath the name was an image of the dawn, and a motto (a line of poetry) which I could not read. Some one had smeared the name with a tar-brush, but it was legible enough. I wondered how many women in St. Nazaire were down at the jetty end, in the blowing weather, looking for this ship's topsails They would never see her again. She would never again come

swayingly over Loire bar with her colours flying, and her guns firing, and her crew beating on the bell. Her crew were down among the coral somewhere near Punta Brava, with the shells of the sea-snails studding their ribs, like buds on the boughs in winter. She was a forlorn-looking ship. I think she would have raised forebodings in one without that hint of her past; for her sides were all foul with salt crystals, marking where the seas had washed in. She had not been painted for two or three years at the very least. Her rigging, which, as Dick had said, had been pillaged by the deserters, was all dangling in bights and loose ends. Her guns were gone from her gun ports. Her spare spars, her boats, her anchors were gone. She was just the crazy old hull of a ship, unable to stir or to defend herself.

She was in sad order everywhere. Her internal paintwork was blistered off or filthy. Her mouldings had all been wrenched away for firewood. Everything about her showed me something of the degradations of the men who sailed in her Once, as any one could see, she would have been counted beautiful, even among other French ships; but no man with any pride or sense of style had been in her for years. She had fallen among thieves, whose lives were like the lives of wild beasts, without forethought, without reverence, without nobility. She was in the hands of men who burned her piecemeal rather than endure the labours of wood-

cutting. Her present owners used her as a means of robbing those better than themselves; they had no thought but to rob. They lived, as I was soon to see, from hand to mouth; like pigs when times were good, like sneaking beasts when times (through their own disgusting vices) were ill. They had stamped the likeness of their souls upon their home, and their home was now to be my prison. When we got aboard they put me into the 'tween decks to attend upon the wounded men. It was a bleak and dirty apartment, with broken windows which looked out upon the creek. There was no furniture of any kind, only a locker with dirty blankets upon it. I had to get some rope-mats from the locker for the wounded to lie upon. After that I had to wash and dress the wounds; for the ship's doctor, a clever Frenchman who had come down in the world, happened to be still drowsy from the effects of his last drunkenness. Dick, who probed for the slugs with me, taught me how to dress the wounds in the Indian fashion, with rinsings of salt water and poultices of dried leaves (like apple leaves, but strongly aromatic), which, he said, where what the wild deer ate when they were sick.

XV.

When the wounded had been put below I went into the cabin to dress Little Theo's wounds. He was down

in the cabin, fanning himself with a big palm fan, and staring dully at an open box, on the lid of which the name of Ed. Beaumont had been burnt with a hot iron. The few things in the box had been scattered untidily about. The lock had evidently been forced by a marline spike. On the top of the litter lay a rather large joint of bamboo, such as seamen sometimes use instead of powder-boxes.

"You see," he said, jerking his hand towards it, "my papers are gone."

"What papers were they?" said Dick. "About the island?"

"Yes," said Theo, "about the gold. The bearings of a treasure of gold worth an Inca's ransom. But the gold is nothing—nothing at all. There was something in the island worth all the gold fifty times over. And the secret of that was among my papers. I don't know," he said, laughing weakly; "we might fix up a plan even yet. It is not too late. It might be done."

"Go easy, Cap," said Dick gently. "Don't you go telling us anything if it's going to set you in the shakes. Slow is the boy, Cap; go slow." He put out a hand quickly and felt Theo's pulse. "You'd be the better not to talk," he went on, wrinkling his brows. "But what's that ashore, there?"

Looking through the stern windows, we saw a man on a bony roan horse galloping down to the shore alongside of us. He had evidently ridden hard. His horse

was in a lather. That he had set out in a hurry was also plain. The horse was not saddled. The man rode by a halter, and larruped his nag with the end.

"Where's the old man?" he hailed—"the cap'en. Hey there, cap'en!"

Theo gave a call through the port, and hurried out to speak with the man.

"This is news of the Sheriff," he said, "you'll see. Stay below, you; I'll be back in a minute"

When he had gone I asked Dick what all this talk of the island meant; how had Little Theo come to be in an island; and what was all this talk of paper and gold.

"Why," said Dick, glancing hard at the rider on the horse, "I'd better begin at the beginning, and tell you what we are. As for what the Cap is, I think I have to ask you that. He's a mystery to us. There—there goes the Cap ashore to talk to the fellow. Look, they're going up the creek a piece. I wonder what's in the wind."

We watched the two men walk slowly up the creek together, talking earnestly. The rider was very demonstrative about something. As far as we could tell from the droop of his shoulders, Little Theo was sorely perplexed by it.

"There's something very rum about Teodoro," said Dick reflectively. "He's a rum fish; he's a queer fish, I guess. I guess he's as odd a dog as hops. Odd how we found him."

"How did you find him?"

"Why," said Dick, anxious, like all sailors, to get his story properly begun at the beginning, "you must know that we're smugglers—that is, we take Spanish goods and sell them to the planters here. Say, you ought to have seen Captain Pointer, our old Cap. He was a jewel of a man, that lad. You should see him drunk. He believes in free trade, does old Doggy Sam. I've seen him run goods into Spanish cities, I have. That takes some doing. And then we made a great run of boats up that river the Magdalena. We went seven days up with goods to smuggle to the Spaniards. It's death to be caught at that game. We'd a been flung to the alligators if we'd been caught. All day we used to lie up under the trees while the mosquitoes ate us; and at night we would paddle on, under the sentries, under the forts, where we could see the matches burning. We smuggled in two thousand pounds' worth of goods, and there was more than five thousand paid for them. Then we drifted down to our ship again with the money in gold bars She lay hidden among the islands, our ship did, all stuck about with creepers, so that her masts were like apple-trees. At Toro—that's the island where we careen—there were great sprees after that time. We drank seven casks of rum in a fortnight. They were splashing buckets of rum all over each other, the hands were."

"What beasts!" I said.

"Yes. It was a pity to waste the good rum," said Dick. "But I tell you our captain could afford it. And he never grudged his hands. You'd ought to see Toro. It's like a little town there when the ships are in. The men have their wives, just like in Jamaica; and there's taverns and cards. He's been careening and trading there these seven years, and he's kept it secret. It's a fine island, all right. A fine little sandy bay, with a brook tumbling down into the sea, and the Trade always blowing aloft. There's very good fruit and turtle there, and the speckled cedar in plenty all over it; fine for plank. There was Indians when we made it first. But we hunted them down, all the tribe. Forty-seven little brown runts with gold in their noses. We sold 'em ten pounds each in Port Royal. There's no Indians there now, except their spectres walk.

"The Indians will be dead by this time. They get homesick or something. They haven't got sense like us; they always die. Now that they're dead, there's no living soul but our gang knows of that island. It stands lonely in the sea. If you go up the hill there you'll see the sea all round you; and to the south a yellowy blink, like a paleness, where the Main shows, far away. But you'll see no ship there; nothing but the sea, and the flying fish.

"One thing we done silly. We kill off all the turtle a few months back. That was a silly kind of a trick to do. So one day, when we were sailing from Toro with

a lot of goods we were going to run, the Cap said, 'Let's cruise about to them westward islands, to see if there's turtle there.' We cruised about for a day, and came to an island which the Spaniards call the 'Dragon's Mouth,' because it has a kind of a jaw look drawn out on a chart. The first thing we saw when we went into the lagoon there was friend Teodoro, lying on the beach, pretty near dead of fever. He was dressed in the rummy rig you see; and how he come there, and what he was doing there, for I guess the island's not inhabited, is one too many for me. Naturally we took him off the ship, with all the gear he had by him. A bamboo full of papers, and a knife was about his whole kit, if I remember."

"But did he never tell you how he came there?"

"Why, no. That's where he went wrong. Any one could have told that there was a mystery about him. And any one could see, after a bit, that old Cap Pointer was going to get at the bottom of it. If he'd up and told some, I don't know; but as he told nothing, we all made it out a bigger mystery than perhaps it was. We nursed him and brought him to. We discovered then that he could navigate. So the Cap gave him the job of sailing-master. We clubbed together and gave him some gear and a chest, and that's all the story. He's been our sailing-master ever since. We tried to get the story out of him. But he's not a man to tell what he don't want to tell. And old Cap Pointer

had a sight too much style to ask where he wasn't wanted."

"So he broke open the chest and stole the papers instead?"

"Well, that's his style."

Soon afterwards Little Theo returned.

"That was a farm hand," he said, jerking his hand towards the rider. "He says that the Sheriff is gathering a posse to arrest us for running contraband. What does 'arrest' mean, Charles?"

My heart began to quake at that. I knew only too well what arrest meant. It meant pressing into the fleet, or flogging, or five years on the chain gang.

"We must get under way," said Little Theo. "But that was not the only thing. Where is a place called Myngs' Creek?"

"I should guess about ten or twelve miles from here," I answered. "But that is only my guess"

"Well, Ricardo," he said, "there's a frigate in Myngs' Creek; and, even if we escape the posse, we shall have her after us. We must sail."

"All very well to sail," said Dick. "But they've only left us two or three sails. And where are we to go to when we sail?"

"Go to?" said Theo. "We shall go to my island, to stop those ruffians. I have a plan." He caught hold of Dick's arm and spoke earnestly. "We must sail.

We must get there before them, I tell you. Get what sail you can, and warp her out."

"All right, Cap," said Dick; "be easy. I can get way upon her, if no more. But these lads of ours give me a tired feeling. It was the funniest thing Sam ever done to leave us these lads to work with. Well. We will sail. But as for you, Cap, you're fretting. And that'll only make the fever worse. You lie still and cheer up"

An hour later Dick returned, to say that they were laying out a warp to the cedars on the bluff all ready to sail. The knuckles of one of his hands were bleeding. I asked him if he had hurt himself. "No," he said. "But one of the crowd didn't want to sail."

"Didn't he?" said Theo.

"He does now," said Dick quickly. "But if you could come on deck, Cap, they might step more lively. I'm only a seaman like themselves. You got a reputation for being a man with style."

"I'll come," said Theo. We all went on deck together.

When we had got to the deck, Theo shouted to the hands to unmoor ship. They muttered and checked at this, knowing how few stores had been left to us by the deserters; but the sight of the two determined men daunted them. After a little moment of waiting, for one of their number to rebel, they set to work with a sort of grudging slowness, maddening to me.

"That's the style," said Dick cheerily. "Rally for

Boca Drago. That's my hearty cocks. Away now and break it. And you (turning to me), aloft with you to the fore-topmast cross-trees. When you see a rock ahead, sing out. You know how a submerged rock looks? When that water ahead turns pale, sing out. Otherwise we shall bump on a few jolly mermaids. Away now; aloft with you."

PART SECOND.

LITTLE THEO'S STORY.

[*This is the story of Theo's doings from the time he was trepanned until he met Charles Harding in Virginia. It is told as he told it to Dick and Charles Harding.*]

I.

YOU must not think that I am mad, or in fever. I am not. Only the story is queer.

You know that I was trepanned at the same time as my young friend. Well, I was carried to Port Royal in Jamaica, and sold at a cheap rate (for I was still feeble) to a doctor, who cured me and afterwards sold me at a profit. My master was a small planter in the north. I was his only servant. I lived with that man as a slave for more than a year. I will tell you what happened after his death.

He was a great man, my master, but he took the yellow fever, far away from the doctors. So he died, in a lonely house, far from Spanish Town. He died at dawn, in a room with a banging shutter, for it was a

windy morning. And I was left free, with only his clothes dangling from the wall, like a hung man, for company, alone in that lonely house. I tell you the forest came all round the house, green, very green, a wall of green, going high up, a darkness of forest. And if you looked at the forest, at first you thought it was all green, green gleaming in the sun, green almost golden, a green sky, with the macaws like scarlet stars. And if you looked longer it was not green at all. No, no. It was not green. It was black. Black as the black bars upon a tiger. A night of black. A piece of night, into which the dawn never broke. And if you walked in the forest it was all black about you.

After a time I could stand that house of death no longer. So I took some of my master's clothes, and seven silver dollars of his money. No more. Not a penny more. And I crept out of the house into the forest, intending to walk to the sea. It was still in the forest, for it was so thick that the wind could only ruffle the upper branches. It could only make a swaying, a sort of swaying, among boughs so far up that only the great eagles could fly to them. Great eagles, who look down from a bald bough among the clouds They look down from branch to branch, each branch like a shelf of rock upon a crag

So I walked on in the forest, on the way to the sea.

After two nights I reached the sea, and pitched my

camp on the sands of a little bay, where there were shell-fish and little soldier crabs for my provision.

II.

The next morning, as I lay by my fire watching the sea, a sloop drove into the bay. She had no mast, so that it is no wonder that I did not see her till she was hard at hand. She was one of the Port Royal sloops; a strongly-built vessel, one of the logwood traders. So when I caught sight of her I stood up to look at her. Truly she had suffered on the way; for, besides her spars, her boats and bulwarks were gone. The sea had made a clean sweep of her. Now she was rolling into the bay with the breeze-current as helpless as a stick. By the soggy way of her rising I could tell that she was water-logged, though her cargo of tanners' mangrove and dyewood kept her from sinking. Her men were aboard of her, trying to keep her head to sea by a couple of rough sweeps which they had made. They had made them out of a pair of boat hooks and some hatch panels. There was not very much of a sea. What one calls a strong lop. It broke pretty fresh on the outlying rocks. What one calls a bright cockle; blowing a full top-gallant breeze. To one standing by the shore it looked easy enough for them to beach her; but the sea is deceptive; and I have lived long enough to know that

the outsider sees only the outside. After I had watched her a minute, I saw that the set of the current, which is always along a bay, not across it at right angles, was taking them on to the rocks. Not quickly, for they were moving very slowly, but still surely, in spite of their pulling on their sweeps. Had they been real sweeps they would have beached her without trouble; but they were jury sweeps, too weak for strong pulling, and there they were slowly joggling to death, with the reef a little nearer every moment.

At first I thought that I could be no use to them; but when they came within hail, say a quarter of a mile away, they began to shout to me. I do not know what they said; but they shouted, and I heard them, and the noise of their appeal touched me. A courage rose up in me, so that I would have gone into the sea to help them in despite of a school of devil-fishes. It was a clearing of my way. These men were to be my friends, my guides to freedom. They had been sent to me.

Now, it was not at all so easy to help them as you may suppose—you, like so many of your brilliant country-people, would have sprung into the surf to save them. Ah! so well I know that heroic way of plunging peculiar to you. But I did not plunge. No. For under the surf in that most beautiful bay were dim grey things, looking always upward, very silently. If you go in a boat near surf like that, and drop a piece of flesh into the water, making no splash, you will see it go shaking

down into the clearness, almost to the coral, and then one of the grey things will rise to it, and take it in. All so still, down there in the green, that it will not seem real. The flesh will be gone, and there will be a great dim shape slowly sinking down again. It will be like a part of the sea's floor rising and falling, not like a living thing; but all the time it is watching you, watching every movement of you, and if you should fall in, do you know how swiftly it could rise? I have seen a boat of castaways in the Mexican Gulf, not far from the Haulover. There were four of them, all dying of thirst, in a boat without oars. And all about that boat was a jostling company, hundreds of them, fidgeting, shouldering, nudging each other, rubbing up along the boat—laughing, I tell you—scraping up along it with arched backs, for all the world like a cat rubbing past your legs. The sea was thick with them. Beating up to them against the wind we could smell them, as you smell mackerel in school. I tell you it was a bad sight, that company about the boat. They followed us back to the ship; though we piked them in the snout by the score; and when we hoisted up those thirsty ones, they rose half out of the water at them. Eh? When I think of that boat near the Haulover I am little minded to leap into water to try to save any one.

I took a good view of the bay; and when I had considered it all, I saw that there was a chance of saving them, but not a very good chance. For you must

know that, in the very bight of the bay, a reef of rocks ran out into the sea like a pier or jetty for a matter of some forty or fifty yards. It was not a broad reef, it was only five or six yards across, but it was at least a stepping-stone. It would bring me nearer to them, if I could keep my footing upon it. That was no very easy thing, let me tell you, for the breeze heaped the water on it. The rocks were as slippery as glass with weed, and from two feet to six inches deep in water. Out at the edges there was a swirl and suck which turned me sick, for let me tell you that those swirls are the play-grounds of the grey things They will watch a swirl all day long, and for days together lying underneath it, looking upwards; and at last, sooner or later, something is whirled off its feet to them, and they will rise with one swift sweep, take it in, whatsoever it may be, and sink down again, to watch for the next thing. Now, looking at the set of the current, I saw that the sloop would probably drift in to within no great distance of this jetty of rocks She would drift, as it were, across its end, at right angles to it, for she was going length-wise along the bay, while the rocks were cross-wise, like an arrow pointing out to the sea. I saw, too, that if she got past the end of the jetty, she would get into what you call a jobble of a sea, a kind of cross current, caused by the conflict between the breeze, the set of the current up and down the bay, and the pier of rocks itself. At the end of the jetty, jutting diagonally seawards, was

a race of white water, in which, as was pretty plain to me, the sloop would have no chance of escaping the rocks further along to my right. I reckoned that in another five minutes, pull as they might, the sloop would be caught in that jobble, and after that she would be afloat perhaps two more minutes if there were no submerged rock to break her back before she piled up ashore. But if you have ever watched a sea in a bay you will know that there are many twisting, outrageous little whirlpools, and tiny whimsical eddies and cross-currents, not plain to the watcher ashore, but terrible to the men in the boat trying to avoid the apparent danger. For all I knew this bay, which I had never before seen, was full of such eddies. I could not count on having so much as five minutes' time to save them. I might have more, I might have very much less. On the other hand, the boat might be brought up safely alongside the pier, by some eddy not apparent, or she might be carried up on to the sand where I stood. Still, I had to decide from what was happening at the moment; I could not allow for what might or might not be

Now, first of all, I said to myself, "It is likely that she has been swept by a sea in a hurricane Her anchor, her bitts, her windlass, and all her deck gear have been washed away. But down below she will have rope enough and spare cables, if I can but get one of them ashore" The instant that the word "cables" crossed my mind something spoke in my brain quite clearly.

I heard it say the word "bejuco." And then I knew what to do well enough.

For here and there, in the forests of these parts, there is a thin cane, strong as manila, and as flexible as coir. It is a very good cane, and the name of it is called bejuco, which means cane. So with one leap I was in the forest, which grew right down to the sand, almost to the sea, in a jumble of green stuff just like painted metal, as a tropical forest does. All a wilderness of green things, a chaos of vegetables. No, it is not a chaos, it is a world of the most exquisite order. Every leaf is turned so as to catch life from its surroundings; the greatest and sweetest and fittest kind of life, either of sun or air or water. Not a blossom, not a twig, not a fruit there but has striven, I will not say with its whole intellect, but with its whole nature, to make of itself the utmost possible, and to give to itself in its brief life a deeper crimson, a more tense, elastic toughness, a finer sweetness and odour. Ah! the life that goes on there, the abundant torrent of life, the struggle for beauty and delicacy. Tell me of your cities. I tell you of the garden and the orchard, where life is not a struggle for wealth, but for nobleness of form and colour. Ah! that forest. It was cool within there, out of the sun, so cool that it was like walking in a well; a dim, cool, beautiful well, full of pale green water from the sea. The flowers called to me: "I am crimson," "I am like a pearl," "I am like sapphires." The fruits called to

me that they tasted like great magical moons. But I had no eyes for them. I looked only for the bejuco. There was bejuco there, miles of it. I tore it down in heaps and coils till it lay around me like snakes. I have never seen it in such plenty since. It was everywhere. It was round my feet and above me, wherever I looked. I knotted the lengths together—snip—snap—as fast as a man-of-warsman reefing. I dragged it out and flung it clear on the beach, you cannot guess how quickly. I had a hundred yards of it down and knotted within two of my precious minutes; but that was not enough: I needed two hundred yards. I tell you, you could not see my hands, so swift they were at that knotting of the bejuco. Soon I had those hundred yards all knotted; and the sloop was near. Perilously near. But I laughed, I tell you, to see her so near, for that only made my triumph the greater. I made my cane double. I fastened it with secure turns to a strong tree growing there, and out to the end of the jetty I went with it, hoping to fling it aboard them. They saw what I meant; the danger had made their wits bright. They had a cable roused up ready to bend on to my cane, so that I might drag it "ashore." But there were fifty yards of water full of sharks between me and the sloop. What would you have done?

"I dunno," said Dick. "Waited to see if they were going to drift nearer, so that I could pitch the line aboard."

"I don't know what I should have done," I answered truthfully. It seemed a difficult situation.

Yes, said Theo, answering Dick That was what I had hoped when I made the cane. But when it was made, when I stood staggering on the jetty-end up to my knees in water at each sea, I found that the boat would not come within flinging distance; far from it. One of those little treacherous eddies and bye-currents had taken her out again; not very much, but still too much for me. And every second made a little difference to her, a yard or two, perhaps less than that, for the tide was against the current.

Now, I had no time to consider what to do. I had to act at once. And as I stood there, seeing the sloop slip away from me, the voice in my brain gave me another message. I heard quite distinctly the words, "slap the water;" and then came the word "burbujas," which is Spanish for bubbles. They sounded quite plainly, just as though they were spoken to me by some one standing near. I am absolutely positive that a watching Providence put them into my mind. Looking down at the sea I saw floating towards me on the tide a little flat piece of wood, like the lid of a preserve box; and when I saw that I remembered an Indian diver whom I had known years before at those pearl-fisheries near the mouth of Axe River, on the coast of the Main. He had told me that when he was about to go down for pearls he slapped the water with his hand, or putting his mouth

to the surface, blew violent bubblings. Those two noises, he said, were enough for any shark, however hungry. So I seized the piece of wood, and struck the water with it fiercely. A dozen times I struck, and then plunging in, with the line trailing out behind me, I struck again, and began swimming towards the sloop. Soon I was alongside the sloop calling to the men to take my line with a boat-hook, which they did, though very clumsily, as men will with death in a bad surf only two minutes ahead of them. They caught my line, yanked it up on board, and bent a hawser to it.

"Jump overboard, one of you," I cried, "and help me get it ashore to a tree;" but one of them shouted, "Be quick," and another cried out, "I cannot swim," and a third said, "Too many sharks."

And just at that moment a shark came almost alongside me. He came rubbing past, I suppose puzzled by the line, and not quite sure whether I were bait on a hook, or just good wholesome dinner. So when I saw him, I punched him hard with my piece of box-lid, and slapped the face of the sea, so that he scurried away. All the time we were drifting fast ashore; so that, for an instant I doubted if I could get the hawser fast in time to save them all.

"Jump in," I shouted again. "Jump in and help me carry the hawser ashore." But it is no good talking to scared men. Besides, they had seen the shark; they would not have jumped into that sea for the worth

of a hatful of rubies. One of them, looking over his shoulder at the surf, called to me to be quick: which angered me. So I called to him to light away the hawser to me as I swam. I will say this much for them, that when I had struck out for the shore they did their best to let the rope follow me gently, lighting it out to me carefully, more by its own weight than anything else; while I, half swimming, half hauling myself back by the bejuco, wondered each instant whether I should hear the sloop take the rocks before I could get the hawser secured. I do not pretend that I went back ashore with all the dignity of a king.

When I got to the jetty I scrambled and stumbled along it, in the breaking water, till I reached the sand. Then I turned, and began to haul in, hand over hand, faster than I have ever hauled a rope since. It is hard to drag a hawser ashore through water. You will say that the tide helped me, or that I am lying. I say most solemnly that at times man's body is seized by spiritual powers stronger than himself; and then he laughs at dangers, flings them aside, tramples on them, stamps them under, destroys them. I have seen an Indian in the Nicaraguas who stood up unclothed, armed only with a faith as strong as chain-mail, while his tribe flung spears at him. The spears bounded off his body. I flung one It bounded back like a ball in a fives-court. I hacked at him with a sword, jarring my arm to the shoulder at each blow, and not a single scratch showed

upon him. His muscles stood out rigid, like rolls of iron below the skin; but there was no drawing blood from him. So I, that day on the beach, was filled with strange power. I could have drawn that sloop ashore with the strength which was surging in me. When I began to haul, I mean when I had the end of the hawser in my hand, and was dragging it up the beach to a tree, I heard a cry behind me, but I paid no attention to it. If they did not believe in me, I believed in myself. When I got to the tree I hauled and hauled, till I had the hawser round it and secured. I made a round turn and two half hitches, and lashed the loose end with bejuco, so that the knot should never come adrift. Then I let myself look at the sloop to see what had happened to her, to see if after all I had been in time.

It was doubtful for an instant. It was so near a thing that at first one could not be sure. Out on the side of the bay was a reef of black rocks, or rather an outcrop of them, a part of the shore. At that moment, in such a bursting cockle of a sea, the rollers were creaming in, great blue hills of them glowing green aloft, all smashing into snow, with a tumult like heavy guns. The sloop, when I looked, was in a hollow between rollers; lifting, as I thought, to be tossed on to the rocks at the next burst. The spray was like smoke all over her, just as though she were on fire. I could see her men straining the hawser taut for their lives round the stump of their mast. It seemed as though they were hauling

on the tackle of a gun, amid the smoke blown back upon them from the discharge. I gave a gulp, expecting to see her whirled down upon the rocks and smashed to chips; but no. The hawser tautened and creaked. I heard the snapping sound as it tautened. I saw the drops wrung from it pattering down, all along its length. The roller burst itself, and leaped aloft in whiteness; another rolled up and smashed down, but the sloop was riding it out upon them; she was fast. For the moment I had saved her. Watching their time her men began, little by little, to warp her away from those breakers, gathering in a little at a time, all hauling hard whenever the sea slackened the cable a little. In a quarter of an hour they were all safe ashore with me. We even tried to save the sloop; but this, with the tide making and only one hawser, we could not do. She went ashore, directly after her men had landed on the little natural jetty. A big sea flung her on to her side, another tumbled her over, two more drove her up on to the beach, where she broke to pieces. She drifted all along the bay in fragments. Watching for these as they bobbed in with the surf, we caught them and dragged them up above high-water mark. In this way we were soon rich with booty. We had some small casks of rum, a cask of ship's bread, a box of jars of Spanish marmalade, a box of raisins of the sun, the captain's drowned parrot, a gun or two with the barrels dinted, a bottle of vinegar, and a couple of new jewel-blocks,

all of which we were glad to have. I should have told you that all the five hands of the sloop had come ashore armed. You, who know the way of life of the logwood cutters, know how they never move five yards from their huts without a weapon, a long knife or machete, a pistol or two, or perhaps their long gun. All my five subjects were armed thus; and they carried with them powder enough to fire a town. I call them my subjects, for they never questioned but that I was to be a chief over them. I had saved them from the sharks; now, of course, I should save them from the perils of the forest. They looked up to me; they deferred to me; they saw that I was their leader.

III.

First of all, I bade them gather up as much of the sloop's keel as possible; for it was sheeted with thin lead, very precious to hunters, who are often short of bullet. Then we heaped up my fire with drift wood and roasted some crabs upon skewers. While we ate we debated what would be our next plan.

There were many things which we might do. We might hunt about in the woods for beef or logwood, and in time push west to some port further along the coast, and then, chartering a sloop, trade what we had gathered for ready money in Port Royal. Or we might march to the nearest port, and either cut out a sloop

or meet with some companions, so as to go a-roving to the Spanish coast. Or we might march inland, through the forest to Spanish Town, where we could have got work on some estate, either in a sugar-mill or in a tobacco-clearing. But this last plan, though I did not say why, did not please me. I was known to many people in Spanish Town; and had I been seen there, I could have been seized as a slave who had not yet served his full term of seven years. More than that, there were some there who would have been curious about my master's death. Slaves receive little justice there. In the end, had I gone to Spanish Town, I might have been tried for killing my master and condemned for want of evidence, as was the rule there. So at last, by management, I persuaded my five servants to this, to stay where we were for a while.

I said to the logwood cutters that I would take one of their number and go into the wood for a little while, to look for a good camping ground near water. I hoped also to get some game for supper. The woods were full of game. So into the woods we went, Don Carlos (the mate of the sloop) and I, each with a gun.

"Have you ever been westward from here?" Don Carlos asked.

"Never in my life," I said. "But we will go now. Something tells me that we shall have good sport if we go westward. So, forward." Remember that up to this time none of these logwood cutters had asked

me how I came there, what was I doing, or what I intended to do. I suppose they held the privateer's creed, that along the Jamaica coast it is always best to mind one's own business. Every other person there has done something to make him keep his mouth shut. We swung round to our right and kept on carefully, a little apart from each other. The wood was less thick after a while. The trees grew more sparsely, towering up to a monstrous height, with very dense foliage high aloft: so dense that in the dimness and coolness underneath them no scrub could grow. It was like a beech wood, in places, if you can imagine beech trees five times the usual size. We did not talk. We were walking apart, with our guns at the ready, looking well ahead for whatever might happen.

Presently, in a clearer part of the wood, it seemed to me that I smelt wild cattle, so I held up my hand to Don Carlos and signalled to him to advance cautiously from behind cover. A moment later the smell drove down to me again in a warm gust; it is an unmistakable smell. I guessed from it that they were lying down in a bunch of thicker timber just ahead, and that the herd was pretty big and not at all used to being hunted. We broke through the thicker wood of which I have told you, and found ourselves on the edge of a piece of savannah land half a mile across. In the savannah, which was just like a rolling big meadow, fenced in by forest, was a herd of a dozen wild cattle, big and whitish, most

of them lying down about fifty yards away. On the other side of the savannah, away to windward, the old bull stood guard. He was about a quarter of a mile away. A little brook ran through the savannah at right angles to our track. It disappeared into the tangle of forest which shut the field in like a hedge. I could not see what became of it afterwards, but my sense of direction told me that we were near the sea. It seemed to me that I heard the wash of the surf somewhere to my right hand, and I had a sense of the sea being just beyond the thicket. From the way the turf was cut by hoof-marks into a road I concluded that the brook was a favourite drinking-place of the herd.

Don Carlos was within ten paces of me. We were both well hidden in the last of the cover. I signalled to him to shoot a young cow which was lying down, a fairly easy mark for him. I meant to take a more difficult shot at a cow further off to the left. Before firing we placed cartridges, ready bitten, in dry leaves at our side, in case we should get second shots. Don Carlos fired, killing his cow. I waited till the herd sprang up. Then I picked out a finer cow than the one I had chosen, and let drive. My cow fell. The herd on getting to its feet galloped to a little distance, then, wheeling, fronted us fiercely, while the old bull advanced upon us, pawing on the turf. So far they did not know what to make of us. I verily believe that they had never before heard a gunshot nor seen a man. In a low voice I called

out to Don Carlos to try and get round their left flank, while I, as soon as I had loaded, would go out and amuse the bull. By the time the bull had arrived within seventv yards of us, Don Carlos, well understanding what I wanted, had begun to creep through the wood in order to flank the herd. He was a good woodsman, and moved verv swiftly and silently. The advancing bull had his eyes fixed steadily in my direction, for he had seen the flash of my gun. As he could not nose me from where he was, up to windward, he advanced leisurely instead of charging. I waited there for him, so as to give Don Carlos time to get within shot again. When the bull was about thirty yards from me he stopped, snorted, stared ahead, and eyed the thicket where I was hidden. He kept flinging up his nose to get a whiff of me, and taking little side paces to see if he could see me. At last, feeling sure that Don Carlos must be in position, I broke from my cover and walked out into the open. The bull, I noticed, was a fine, well-grown beast, rather old and tough perhaps, but good enough for a seaman's dinner.

"Buenos dias," I said to him. "Come and be killed, O bull. I have here a beautiful bullet for you"

As I finished my sentence he put his head down, and charged so swiftly that I had barely time to step aside. He was not like a bull of the pasture, used to the short gallops possible in a hedged field. He was like a fine steel battering-ram on springs; and when he missed

his charge he spun round in his own length, and charged again, lashing out with his horns. He was too quick for me. I could hardly avoid his rushes. After the first rush or two he grew cunning. He turned in his rush almost as swiftly as I could step aside. I wanted to kill him, for he was getting dangerous; but did not like to do so till I could hear Don Carlos's gun. The cows, as I could see, were pacing a little nearer towards me to see their leader in his glory. I laid down my gun and got out my pistol, ready to shoot the bull at close quarters. Just as I got it out I heard Don Carlos give fire. The bull rushed in on me. I stepped swiftly aside, caught my foot on a bit of rotten wood, and came down heavily, just as the bull turned. He came at me so quick that I hardly had time to save myself. My pistol was almost on his fell when I pulled the trigger. I had barely time to roll out of the way as he came down with a thump which shook me. I knew that he was hard hit, so I left him, and seizing my gun I fired at the nearest cow. She was the last of the herd, now galloping away from us, up wind. It was a long, quick shot, which somehow carried true beyond all hope, for the cow went over dead. On turning to load, I saw the wounded bull half rise to his feet, coughing hard, before falling over. He, too, was dead. I had killed three in three shots. Don Carlos stepped out of the cover and waved his hat to me. His last shot had somehow gone astray, but that was no great loss, for there we were, with four full-

grown cattle for our pains, after only a couple of hours of hunting.

IV.

The first thing to do was to get to work upon them. We rapidly cleared a big space upon the ground for our boucan, taking all the grass off for about seven yards all about, lest we should set fire to the savannah. Then Don Carlos laid the dry grass thus gathered as for firing, while I cut stout forks, four feet high, and long straight poles to lie across them, and set them up in the ground like little toy gallows, all about the cleared space. Then very hurriedly we got together some broken deadwood from the thicket, and set to work upon the animals, We stripped off the hide of the old bull, and quickly quartered him. I had borrowed an axe from one of the men before we started out; so this did not take very long. Men used to the work can flay and cut up a steer in a few minutes. As soon as we had cut the quarters off, we hung them up upon the frames over the fireplace, and lighted our fire, so that the smoke, which we made thick by adding the rest of the meat to our fuel, might season the meat, or, as it is called, "boucan" it for us. When we had set all our meat drying thus, Don Carlos took charge of the fire, while I pegged out the hides, and scraped them with wooden scrapers. After scraping them well I rubbed them over with hot wood ashes

from the fire, till they were well enough for the present. After that I had a strange feeling that more was about to happen. I felt drawn, as though by the brook, to go down to the sea. I kept repeating to myself, "Down to the sea: go down to the seashore. It is only four hundred yards away," till it was like a tire-some song which one cannot get from one's head. So I said to Don Carlos that I would go off down to the seashore, and back along it to the bay where the sloop had been lost, to tell the other hands that it would be well to camp where our fires were lighted. I built up a load of firewood before I started, so that Don Carlos might not be overworked, and then set off, wondering what new miracle was about to happen. I knew that something strange was about to happen. If the devil things, which the blacks are said to worship in the forest, had come out to greet me, I should not have been sur-prised. I felt that all in the air was full of wonderful presences, which were moving the thoughts on my brain as a player moves chessmen on a board. I felt that it n[illegible] only a snap of the fingers to make me see those p[illegible]

I followed al[illegible]ng the little brook, till the scrub closed in upon it so [illegible]ckly that I had to move more to one side. The [illegible]ub, though thick, was not tall; but there were [illegible]y uprooted trees tossed in all direc-tions. A tornado [illegible]d once swept that way. After a while the brook [illegible]d out into a pool—a pleasant

little pool, with tall grass but no trees upon its borders and a little artificial fall at its further end. I saw at once that about a year before a camp had been there. The campers had built up the pool, as far as I could see, for convenience in filling their water-casks. I guessed from that that they were sailors who had watered their ship there; but, whoever they were, it was plain that they had stayed for some time. Looking about me I soon came across their huts, with the bed sticks, or barbecues, on which the skins of their cots had been stretched, still standing in the ground. There were charred twigs on the hearthstones, and light ash scattered here and there, not yet blown away. There were eight barbecues altogether, from which I gathered that the ship had been a small trading sloop with eight hands in her. Looking about among the scrub (already a foot high inside the hut), I found a broken old strap (part of a sheath knife belt), and a bull's shoulder blade partly polished, and carved, not badly, with a picture of a ship under topsails, going free, flying a French ensign. I gathered from that that the campers were Frenchmen. The carver's knife had slipped, so as to scratch the ship right across, and he had abandoned the bone as spoiled. I could not find any boucan ashes near the hut, which made it clear that the men were either not hunters or extremely bad ones. The bull's shoulder blade, being dry and old, had probably been picked up on the beach.

I was just making up a little theory to myself about

these hunters, telling myself that they had come there in the drought, when watering must have been a slow process, owing to the shallowness of the arroyo, when I saw something among the scrub, a little further down towards where the surf was beating. I looked again to make sure; but there was no doubt of it. A sloop lay high and dry, a hundred yards from the sea; her bows in the hedge of greenery which marked the limit of the forest, her stern in the shingle of the beach. She had been brought in by a tidal wave, and let down there, seemingly unhurt, on an even keel. The wave which brought her in had probably uprooted the trees, and then sucked back, leaving her stranded. The huts by the little pool had been made by her crew. I tell you, the sloop was a beauty of the world; strong as a roving bull, and of a model like a swan. She was in good trim, too, even after a year on the beach; for her crew before leaving her had covered her with tarred canvas everywhere, ports, hatches, deck and planking; a hard black waterproof case for her. But what I could not find was the reason for her abandonment. Why had her eight men left her alone there, carefully sealed, when they might so easily have got her off and put to sea? Her anchors were still at the bows, with good chain cable, none of the hawser stuff, to warp her out by. But, no. There she was, snug and secure, after a year ashore, while her men were gone. That they had planned to come back was evident. Otherwise they would never

have covered her. I could not imagine why they should have left her. Plainly their business (whatever it was) had taken them inshore. If they had been going to another part of the sea-coast they would have got the sloop off and gone by sea. A moment more showed me that their business had been decided upon at the last moment, after careful preparations to get the sloop off to sea. They had been hard at work cutting rollers from the trees broken down by the wave. They had cut about twenty or thirty with one small-headed axe. I could tell that they had had only one axe by the marks on the trees. The blade (one could see it plainly) had a notch knocked in its edge; it did not cut clean. All the rollers had been cut by a notched axe; and the cuts were so small that only a small axe could have cut them. I saw now why the men had taken the trouble to build huts. The wood-cutting must have been a long job. Very likely they were at work for a week upon those rollers. The wood was almost as hard as iron-wood, it was a strong, dense, darkish-fibred wood. I have seen the like elsewhere; the Indians call it manchi.

V.

denly they had left their ship after protecting her carefully against all possible hurt by wind and weather. They had gone off inland intending to come back, and they had not come back. What could have tempted them inland? For a moment I thought that they might have been taken off by a ship; but that I decided was improbable, impossible. What shipman would have left such a ship as the sloop ashore? It was not possible. I went up to the sloop and swung myself on to her deck, intending to open up her cabin-hatch, which was firmly battened down with wedged battens. In one of the wedges a roll of oilskin had been jammed. I pulled it out and opened it, and found inside it a leaf from a "Seaman's Friend," with a little writing in black lead on the unprinted side of it. This was what it said,—

"Sloop Wanderer. Cap Josiah Teat. Goin off this day, seven hands all well. The gold-fields. The glorus gold-fields. If you put in here, Cap Knight, respeck our nise loop Indian bob noes glorus gold-fields to command J.T."

There was no date, and no superscription. It was, however, plain that the sloop's crew had marched away into the wilds to look for some gold-fields. Indian Bob was probably a slave who had taken to the woods like myself, and happened upon them while they were cutting the rollers. The Jamaican woods were full of Indian

Bobs in my time. They were mostly forest Indians from the Mosquito country. They used to get away pretty easily, for no white man can watch an Indian. Then they would wander about in the forests, living like wild beasts, till perhaps they fell in with each other and set up house there, or reached the coast and went a-roving with some gang. They are useful to catch fish, some of them. Any Indian Bob, if you listened to him, would tell you of glorious gold-fields, and perhaps only mean really that you could get plenty of meat there. This particular Indian Bob had bewitched this gang of Captain Teat's, however; and there they were, gone. Either they had found the gold-fields, and become too rich to bother about the sloop, or they had died on the way. That was plain enough. As for gold-fields, well, I believe that the hills are full of gold, if one could only find it. The Indians had the secret in old time. It is there still if you stupid Englishmen care to look for it. I hoped that Captain Teat and his expected friend Captain Knight would by this time be rich enough to go cruising in frigates. For myself, who was not so rich as that, this sloop seemed exactly suitable. I took out my knife and cut away a part of the tarpaulin covering, so that I could blaze my name on her upper planks as a sign that I took possession.

The crew came back along the coast with me, but not in time to take off the sloop's cover that night. We had too much to do before dark, helping Don Carlos at the

boucanning meat, gathering firewood, rescraping and ash-curing the hides, building up huts for the night, and getting supper ready. After our work we lay about the fire, smoking, talking of the sloop, wondering what she might contain. One of the men there had sailed with Captain Teat long before in a trading-vessel. "A big, ugly, red-chopped lad; a pretty hard case all over" was what he called him. Latterly, so he had heard, he had been roving on the main with many others; but as to his luck at the gold-fields no one had heard. We had a quiet camp there. Our presence frightened away the wild things, and the smoke of the fires kept away the mosquitoes. In the morning we breakfasted off meat, ship's bread, and wild plantains. Then, leaving a hand by the fire to see that the meat took the smoke, we went to the sloop and ripped her tarpaulins from her hatchways. A heave of a crowbar opened her cabin to us. We went down and forced open the skylight.

VI.

When we could see we found ourselves in a neat sloop's cabin, some twelve feet square. There were two bunks on each side, small chase ports on each side of the rudder head, and a table, or rather a flap of wood working on a hinge which could be used as a table, against the forward wall. The bunks had green baize

curtains to them. They were all neatly made up and folded down, with the mosquito pipes, privateer fashion, stuck in a rack within reach of the sleeper, all ready loaded with sitra leaf, to make a smoke if the mosquitoes were troublesome. In one of the bunks there was a bookshelf arranged against the bulkhead at the port. It contained a tinder-box, a pair of small brass-headed Spanish pistols, a bullet-mould, a small wooden box containing silver buttons and a bit of crude turquoise, a copy of the works of Quevedo, very filthy and half-gutted, and half a dozen obsidian arrow-heads of the kind the Indians use. What struck me most about the cabin was its neatness and cleanness. The guns were not in their carriages (we found them afterwards, wrapped in bast and carefully tallowed in the hold, in a box by themselves, small one and a half pounder guns made of brass, and of the long kind, so that they carried nearly a mile, very truly), but the ropes of the gun carriages had been coiled as though for a king's inspection. In the lockers under the bunks were clothes neatly put away with lumps of sandal-wood. There was a box of tobacco-leaf, gone very dry and brittle, and a few curios of the kind seamen buy; strings of Indian beads, feather mats and fans, priests' dresses made of macaw-tails, all the usual gear. In one of the lockers were some bo'sun's stores, spikes, fids, and nails (for trade as well as for use), and many balls of spunyarn. Under the cabin floor was a magazine, or rather a strongly fenced-off part

of the after-hold. The walls of it were all thickly lined with felt, for there were powder barrels stored in this place, as well as a plentiful store of provisions. The biscuit tank, which was of iron, was full of Spanish rusk, packed in wood with thin lead coverings. It was all as fresh as though it had just come piping hot from the ovens at Havanna The other tanks and barrels contained boucanned beef, in need of a new boucanning. I had them sent on deck at once and rolled away to the fires to be burnt. At one side of the magazine was a sail-locker, very awkwardly placed, containing two suits of sails, much patched and worn.

"That is the after guard," I said. "Now forward to the main hatch to see what she carries in her hold."

When we lifted up the hatch we came upon the guns all carefully laid away in their jackets. There were two chase-guns, as I have said, and four long threes for the upper deck, as heavy an armoury as such a boat could endure. Besides the guns there were bales of Spanish goods (mostly vicuna wool and piacaba), water-breakers in good number, and enough ship's stores to fit out a frigate, let alone a sloop. I suppose Captain Teat had fallen in with one of the small store ships which sail with the annual treasure fleets, bound towards Spain from Vera Cruz. After looking into the hatch I ordered some of the hands to get the water-breakers emptied over the side, while I went forward to have a look into the fo'c'sle. This was rather a difficult business, for the heels of the

spare spars were lashed down on the fo'c'sle scuttle. While these were being shifted I looked into the fore-peak, where I found a small supply of firewood, and the ship's running and standing rigging all coiled and ticketed, ready to be sent aloft again. Whatever else Captain Teat may be, he is certainly an artist of a sailor. He had cared for that little sloop as tenderly as though she were his child. I have never seen a ship in such order. Never.

When I got down into the fo'c'sle I found four cot bunks ready for use, as neatly made up as those in the cabin had been. The room was small, and not very well arranged, as there was a standing table in the middle which took up much space. The walls had been painted a bright white for coolness; and some one had painted a ship flying past under topsails all round the house, an English ship chasing a French ship (or was it the other way about?) so swiftly that you could see the foam flying up under the bows, and the scarlet of the banners crinkling. I suppose it had been done by the French-man who carved the bull's bone. There were five sea-chests either round the table or under it, four of them unlocked, the fifth lashed up and sealed.

The four which were open contained sailors' clothes of the usual kinds—thin duck and dungaree, slippers worked with beads, spare knives, spare hats, soap, plug tobacco, pipes, oddments from the islands, canes made from sharks' spines, queer shells, money, gold dust, silver

ornaments and silver crude. The sealed chest was more interesting. It contained two suits of fine white Spanish drill with large silver buttons. Underneath the suits were green silk shirts, and a lot of laced things, all stolen from the Spaniards no doubt. Beneath these were a ballad-book, a prayer-book, a book of sermons, two or three pairs of raw-hide slippers, and a layer of thick bamboo-joints as big round as a man's leg. All these pieces of bamboo were about two feet long, and stopped most carefully at the ends with plugs of wax covered over with tarpaulin. The canvas was tightly served down upon the wax, so that each piece of cane made a bottle or box.

"Say," said Don Carlos, who had come down to see what was in the fo'c'sle, "why was the chest locked, and what is in the bamboo, anyway?"

I said that the owner of the chest had probably died on the voyage, and that the captain had sealed up his belongings so as to hand them over to his relations. As for the bamboos, they were a privateer's waterproof cases. I have seen privateers on the march slung about with just such cases, one containing powder, another shot, another his maps of anchorages, his journal, brushes, colours, and pencils, a fourth his provision, a fifth his money. They are easily made and replaced. You cut the bamboo down with one blow of a machete, chop off as much as you need, stop the end with beeswax, slip in your goods, stop the other end, and march on. If

you fall into a river or the sea they cannot sink, nor can the water penetrate them.

When we had examined the fo'c'sle we opened a little iron box of a deck-house which was chained to the deck near the mast. It was a tiny cook-room, just big enough for the cook, the fireplace, and the oven. Inside it, when we entered, were the harness cask and scuttle butt, which I ordered to be placed on deck in their proper places. After this I went down alone into the cabin, and broke the wax seal upon the first of the dead man's bamboos.

VII.

I tell you that that morning in the cabin was like the other world breaking in upon me. There I was in the cabin of a handsome ship, captain of a crew, after being a little lonely hunted thing flying from my master's heirs—a slave, a nothing, a convict. Outside, I could hear the songs of the seamen as they built up a fire near the huts, so that they might finish their boucan nearer to the sloop. The sunlight slanted down the skylight all round me. The breeze brought in a faint smell of pitoma blossom, with some whiff of the sea too, so that I learned to taste the very spirit of the island at each breath. It was perhaps only fancy, but as I sat there I thought that that voice in my brain spoke to me, saying, "See what I have done for you. See how I

have cleared the way for you. Open the bamboos; open them." And I had a fanciful impression that the cabin was full of seamen looking at me—Captain Teat and his gang, red-faced Captain Teat, and Indian Bob in his leopard skin, and the white-faced keen Frenchman who had painted the ships. There was another person there too—a tall man, with long black hair falling over his shoulders, and his face all tanned like an Indian's. I saw him in my mind quite clearly. I saw him leaning over to watch me, putting back the lace from his green silk shirt with one hand, while the other rested on the table. He was smiling at me; he was the man whose chest I had opened; he was the dead man whose writings were waiting on the table.

The first bamboo, when opened, contained a little box of Indian pigments, very bright and lively, and a bundle of those spindle-whorls, which are really Inca writing. I had seen things of the same kind before; but it struck me that these particular spindle-whorls were made rather differently from those which I had seen in the past. They were differently coloured, and the bulb, or knob in the middle, seemed to me to be enamelled instead of painted The paints in the box had been used fairly frequently. The little bamboo finger-joints in which they were packed were about half empty. At the bottom of the case were some European pencils and brushes, as well as a couple of those Indian brushes. Do you know what an Indian brush is? It is a piece

of a hardish fibrous wood, burnt straight and pointed, and then gnawed at the end by an Indian woman, till the fibres are all distinct and soft, like the hairs in a European brush. There were two of these in the case. When I saw them, I knew that the dead man had lived a goodish while in an Indian town; for the brushes are women's property, and hard to come at. You can get a bow or a few arrow-heads from a buck for a couple of big beads; but the brushes and women's gear you cannot buy: they are half sacred, or something. You can only get them if you become one of the tribe, like one of my friends long ago. The whorls were interesting, the pigments and brushes were suggestive. The dead man had been among the Indians more than was usual, and had obtained their confidence, and some unusual curios. On the whole, I was disappointed with the contents of the first bamboo; but they taught me one thing, that the owner had done unusual things, and must therefore have been an unusual man. You stupid Englishmen could never have reckoned so cleverly. You would not have thought of that. You do not know that an unusual man is apt to act unusually—eh? You think that an unusual man must be mad, because he does not behave like an idiot like the rest of you? Well, I put everything back into its case, and opened the second bamboo.

Now, in the second bamboo there was nothing but an oiled skin roll containing a lot of maps and charts, very beautifully drawn on good paper. I did not look through

them very carefully; for I had only to glance at them, so as to catch their titles, to see that they were mostly of the coasts of the Main, from about Chiriqui, northwards past Cape Thanks-to-God, to Cape Catoche, Tide Lake, the Haulover and Vera Cruz—parts of the world which I had not then visited. I rolled them up and put them to one side, with the reflection that the dead man was an artist of no mean merit, as well as a clever seaman, to have made such beautiful maps. His name was upon one of the maps, idly written down as one sometimes writes one's name so as to fix a memory. "Lorenzo O'Neill, in the ship *Wanderer*, Captain Christian, Comr., June 1st in ye p.m. 1674, off Roatan, Barbareta estm'd N.E., 4 miles, and a fine brisk breeze, 6 m, under whole topsails." I suppose he had written down all that so that in years to come he might remember the very details of the evening in which he wrote them, the sight of the distant island, the noise of the wind and the ship straining. Well, he was dead now, and would remember nothing more at all, not even his strange outlandish name. I turned to case number three.

In the third case there were two oiled skin rolls, each containing a soft, large, pliable book of very good thin paper. One book was closely written on both sides of the pages, in very black ink, with scarlet capitals, in Lorenzo O'Neill's hand. It made a sort of journal of his life from 1683 to 1691; but most of it was a dry record of courses and days' runs, with the direction of

the wind and the quantity of water still aboard added in hieroglyphs There were large gaps in the narrative, as in all seamen's logs, whenever the ship lay in harbour or careening. After these gaps there was generally a long, very interesting piece of narrative, describing the setting out of a new voyage or foray, with the reasons for it and the equipment. The entries would then become shorter and shorter, till at last they would be the bald notes and sailing-master's jottings of which I have told you. "Course N47 W.Lat. D.R.27.10.N.Dist.R 216 m. Wind gusty to fresh gale. N.E. to E.N.E. W, in gallons, 177. Bread ran out. Setting up lower main rigging. Thompson's hands very bad. Noe bolsom. Carry'd away ye fore boline in ye a.m."

That is a very good specimen of the entries which sailing-master Lorenzo O'Neill wrote, after he had settled down to the business of cruising. The larger entries were more amusing. One of them ran like this:—

"So when Captain Hudsel began to be reasonable merry (as to give him his due he never exceeded in his liquor), I went ashore to avoid the noise of their singing and the Smoak of their Tobacco, which did ever offend me, thof it is common to that extent it is a Vice. There were no Lights in the Indian Town, not soe much as a Fire. It was one of their God's Feast-days, which they keep up at a great Rate among themselves. They were all in their Paw-waw House, making such an Uproar

as you would think a Basket of Cats was murdered. This they do, as Don Andreas confessed, to make their God speake. I could not learne the Ceremony as they doe practise. It in part consists of going to the Paw-waw House mother-naked, and houling and scraitching there like Wild Beasts and other strange Animals, till they are all of a muck-sweat and fit to burst. What other Rites they may practise there I confess I am ignorant of; nor did I ever meet with one who had seen Em. But that they have a god or devil I know from my own experience, for it chanced I crep very close to the Paw-waw House at the very Nick or Moment when they fell Silent after a Howl, as they doe always out of a Reverence, to let his Devilship have his Say, belike. In that Moment of Time I heard a small quaking Voice, answering to their questions which I do suppose their priests, or Wise Men, had put before hand. It was much such a Voice as you might expect an old Monkey to speake with, rather high and as't were wavery, but not human, nor was it Indian, who speake always very round in the throat, like the low Irish, as they are called, in the Towns about Limerick, where I was as a Boy in one of the Beef-Ships, supplying the King's Fleet in K. Charles his Time. It was very plain and terrifying, and to be round with you, the Moonlight turned all one Ghoast to me so as I fled aboard again. I learned ye next day that Don Andreas took it very Ill of me that I had been so wanting in good manners

as to Eavesdrop upon his God-ship, which they call in their paltry Tongue, Tah-um-ba, as much as to say Big King or Strong King, so that I had even to give him a new hatchet, and some beads for his Wife, to bring him to be pacified. For to tell the truth they are a mean ignorant Sett, quickly brought about from one Opinion to T'other, so as we may say among ourselves, one may be a King's Minister and a King's dinner, all in one day, among 'em. Yet they have this Commune or Familiar, which works strange Matters as I have seen, so as it might be worth a Man's while to enquire into it, what Art they have in the Occult Way, I mean for the enlargement of Human Knowledge, which must ever be the aim of a Rational Man. And to speake Truth I am inclined to the Opinion that they may be of the generation of the Ishmaelites, who wandered abroad in the Patriark's Time, and may have kept among em some Scraps of Original Art, as it is seen the Gipsies have, which may be of the same thievish blood if all were known, as D^r Le Page setts out, who is a Member of the K of F's Household. Yett this I leave to the Learned in such matters. They are above the Stretch of a plain Tarpawling. To proceed."

I studied this log-book long enough to find out what sort of a man Lorenzo O'Neill had been, and what he had done in the world. What his early life had been, who can tell? He began suddenly, in 1674, as the sail-

ing-master of the ship *Wanderer*, evidently an English ship, under Captain Christian, a Frenchman, famous ten years later all over the Indies for his taking of the town of Veraguas, without finding there a silver sixpence to reward his pains. From his alliance with Captain Christian I guessed that O'Neill had taken to the privateering life through some mishap, such as shipwreck or capture by the Spaniards. Otherwise, he would have been with an English captain. This was a guess, but a guess from evidence, even slight evidence. is not called a guess, but imagination. After 1683 he had cruised about along the western parts of the Main, taking prizes and amassing money from them —about five hundred pounds in seven years, as little marginal sums in red ink declared. His interests were scientific, not personal. He went privateering more from a love of discovery than for money. Towards the end of his cruising, especially (as it seemed to me from a hasty reading) after his adventure with the devil's voice in the Paw-paw house, he took evident interest in the Indians. I put the log-book down and took up the other book.

Now, this second book puzzled me indeed; for though it was written it was all in symbols and hieroglyphics, of all colours and of outlandish shapes, like Egyptian writing. It was dated, in the beginning page, 1690. At the other end of it (for I turned it over to see if there were any clue at the end) was a dictionary of Indian

words, with their English and Spanish meanings—about six hundred words in all; and a further list of Indian bird, beast, tree, fruit, flower, and plant names, with the uses to which the Indians had put them. After this were short stories or pieces of writing in the Indian tongue, which by this time, I suppose, O'Neill had learned pretty perfectly. Each piece of writing was headed by a symbol, or more than one symbol, of the kinds used at the beginning of the book. What in the world the book signified I could not think. It was as great a puzzle to me as the Chinese alphabet. But at last, after saying to myself, "What would you have done had you been interested in the Indians?" the puzzle began to grow more clear. O'Neill had made a list of the Indian words, and then a sort of dictionary of the Indian learning, the knowledge of plants and creatures, etc., such as the Indians from their way of life must be very expert at. After that I presumed he had wanted to know something of the Indian philosophy, their explanation of the world, their gods and devils, their sacred seasons, their laws both social and moral, their religion and observances, their gospels and mythologies, and their legends and half-remembered traditions, handed down in a blurred way from the days before the Incas. Surely, I thought, this is what he would have wanted to do after taking the trouble (and it must have been great trouble) to make a dictionary. Perhaps, I said to myself as I read, all this

writing in the Indian tongue is a reporting of what they have told him, written down from notes taken at the time, and written in the original lest some one should steal the manuscript, since there are as many thieves in a pirate ship as in a church ashore at sermon time. "But," I argued to myself, "all this picture-writing is strange to me. I know not what this may mean. The Indians have no way of writing, except the crude sign-writing which they smear in the dust, or on the sand, to show which track they have taken at a want-way. Can it be that O'Neill in his wanderings among the Indians has come across some key to the writings of the Mexicans, and is this picture-writing of the same kind, or has he invented a secret hieroglyphic alphabet for himself?" I decided that I would find out if it were possible for me to do so. Understand, I was not interested—I was piqued, I was curious. I was not going to be baulked by something which might be strange. For, since my deliverance from my enemies and all those marvels in the wood, I felt that those lands and islands, where the moon is glorious and the air is heavy with spice as though incense was always being crushed, were full of all manner of presences And "perhaps," I thought, "the Indians have a knowledge of these presences, and can talk with them, and call them into view." This was my fancy I turned to the next bamboo.

In this there was a long bulky roll of Indian cotton of a dull white colour, and so thick that it filled the case.

It was, as I supposed at first, a piece of Indian embroidery; for one end of it was all broidered crudely with colours. Looking at it more closely, I saw that it was not broidery but painting, dashed on hurriedly, and done by a European, not by an Indian at all. There were attempts at shading which no Indian would have done.

"It must be a copy," I said to myself, "of what an Inca painted long ago on the wall of some temple. Lorenzo O'Neill has seen this temple. And the writing there is of an absorbing interest. He has tried to make a copy of it all on Indian cotton cloth, the only material to be had there. But it gives me the impression that he has not had time to finish it. What has prevented him? What stopped the record, I wonder?" Something told me in my heart that Death had stopped the record. I turned to the last bamboo.

In the last bamboo was a roll of parchment which, when flattened out, was a full four feet by four feet. It was a beautiful map of the island which (I gather) is known to pilots as Boca del Drago. It was painted in fair colours, with little pictures of ships in the sea, and dolphins blowing about it, tossing white water up. The anchorages were marked with bearings and soundings, so that any man might take a ship in by that map. The bays where the turtle fed were marked. The patches of firing-wood were marked. There was no spring nor brook there which had not some mark or note in scarlet

ink upon it, as, "This spring is unwholesome in the Rains." "The water of this brook is of a bitter quality. It cured Mr. Horne of ye yellow fever, as he supposed." "Here the water falls in over a Clift, which is hard to come at by boats watering." A note in the margin, under the map's beautifully written title, said that the best anchorage was up a small northern creek, which widened out to a lagoon or haven with a fair runlet of a brook and a good dry sandy landing. But that all who came to the Island were to beware of the Indians, "who are salvage if you do not bring them to be quiett by good Treatment. They are secrett, bloudy salvages, but the truth is, not dangerous if you are bold among 'em, calling out Mamaubah Meegah, nor will they make any sudden Attack; but Stragglers alone must look to it, if they venter to the Woods. It is, as they esteem, a Sacred Islet, to their kind of Godds. The savages there are guards to the Mysteries. They will not brook any Sacrilege."

At the foot of the map was another note, in a sprawling scrollwork. "The Temple is hard to find. From it, the Roncadores bear N 10 E, and the spur of ye Key N 10 W. It lies in the Apex. You cannot fetch it direct. A good Rime to remember,—

"Past the Stone Virgin. Past the Scree. And uppe
To th' old King's Tombe, and the Devill's drinking-cup.
From which the running streame will surely guide
To what the painted Sepulcker doth hide.
by Lorenzo O'Neill. Sg. Master. 1691."

I was ignorant of the Indian tongues at that time, but having these books in my hand gave me an interest in them. I began to tell myself all manner of romantic tales about the Indians. I tried to decipher the drawings on the roll. I remember saying to myself that I would learn the Indian tongues if ever a chance offered. As to the map of the island, I asked the hands if they knew the place. They said that they had heard that it was one of the Bay Islands, and out of the track of ships. I said to myself that perhaps I would some day go there, and find out what the painted Sepulcker hid. Well, I went there. I found out.

VIII.

When we had repaired that little sloop we hove her down to the sea on rollers, and floated her. We filled her with beef and fresh water, and put to sea in her, after naming her the *Providence*. We shaped a course first for Antigua, where we sold the logwood in her to a dyer. Here we engaged a Mosquito fish-spearer named Peter, who taught me (since I am quick at tongues) the Mosquito language. Then we wandered off among the Samballoes, to live the life of the privateers there; and so, little by little, took to cruising for the Spanish trade and joining the Indians' war-parties, getting a little gold-dust and a little chocolate, with a good deal of fever

and hard knocks. While we were among the Indians of those parts I learned a little of the Andrea tongue, very little, but enough to get along by. All the time, wherever I was, I was busily studying that record of Lorenzo O'Neill's. I soon found that parts of it were written in the Mosquito speech, but these parts were little more than lists of leaves and fruits, with their virtues and the beliefs attached to them. The rest of it was incomprehensible to me, for I knew not even the first principle of the old Indian way of writing in which O'Neill with incredible skill and patience had hidden his discoveries.

After a month or two, however, chance brought me ashore in Campeachy, at one of the logwood-cutters' camps in the Lagoon of Tides, and here I got upon the puzzle.

It is the custom in these camps to do no cutting on Saturdays. Instead of working you wash the scarlet off your arms, and take your gun and wander off into the woods to fetch your beef for the camp's provisions. So I, who was feeling that my destiny had brought me thus far upon my way only to leave me puzzling at something which I felt to be very wonderful, went into the woods alone one Saturday, taking a straight course to the savannah lands, where (as I knew) a herd of cattle often haunted for the sweetness of the grass which grew there. I approached well to leeward of the feeding-ground, and came upon the herd unexpectedly as it

trooped to fresh pasture. It was a fine, well-grown herd, made up, as I suppose all these herds are, of Sisal cattle gone wild. Looking at them, I noticed in the rearguard of them a young bull whose hide was almost a pure white. That is rare among the wild cattle, which are pale or pale-tawny. This young bull must have joined the herd newly from some enclosure. There were Spanish estancias within two hundred miles of us. He must have come from one of those. When I saw him I thought to myself that I had long desired to have a white bull's hide for my cot-bed. I vowed that I would either have this bull's hide or leave him mine there on the field. So, after waiting till the herd had almost passed me, I stepped out into the open opposite this young bull, and waved my hat to him. He was marching proudly a little to one side of the cows, so as to raise no jealousy in the leader of the herd. I stepped towards him, whistling softly to attract his attention He wheeled and turned to me, while the herd, drawing well away, fronted to watch, tossing their heads. The white bull, after a steady stare, advanced towards me with his muzzle stretched out. I fired and hit him, but not very severely. He charged at once, as the herd galloped off, and that so suddenly that he nearly caught me. I fired again as I stepped aside, and hit him so hard that he kept his course into the wood. I reloaded my gun and went after him, following him easily by the swathe he had torn in the scrub. It was as though a ship's

cutter had sailed through the jungle with a fair wind. There was a little bright blood here and there upon the grass; but so little that I knew that his wounds were bleeding internally.

I went after him pretty quickly along this track which he had cut for me. I had no reason to fear anything. The Indians of that part of Campeachy were not friendly to us, having been bribed by the Spaniards to check our settling there. Still there were, as I thought, no Indians anywhere within ten miles of me. Not that I could be sure of it. The forest thereabouts was very dense, and I knew only what the logwood cutters had learned by hearing and rumour during their stay in the lagoon. I was surprised, though, when I saw what I saw that morning.

For, after a couple of miles of tracking, I came upon a clearing in the forest. I suppose it was about a hundred yards across altogether. In it was an Indian village of a kind which was new to me. I had seen plenty of Indian villages during my stay in the Indies. They are of the poorest kind of building. You can see the buck Indians make them for themselves at the end of a day's march. A dozen chops with a hatchet will give them enough bamboos for the frame. All the rest of the building is a laying on of those broad palm-leaves for thatch. I have seen a few tribes make them with greater care than others; but even with the best of them the huts are shacks and hovels. A gipsy's hut on a

common is a palace to them. Now the huts in this particular village were not like that at all. They were built of adobe brick, and tiled with what looked like terra cotta. They were ranged in a neat little street, down which ran a brook. The gardens and plantations were small, but neatly kept. They had not much in them except plantains, but I noticed that some of them had tobacco growing.

I came upon this place quite suddenly. I had not suspected it, nor was I prepared for it. But coming on it, I took it in at a glance, as a man in the forest learns to do. The bull was down on his knees in the middle of a tobacco patch, coughing himself dead. I realized that I was in a strange situation, among a people new to me. What sort of a reception they might give me I could not guess; but, since my prey had destroyed a part of their crops, they were not likely to be loving to me.

They appeared soon enough, as you may suppose. There were about twenty of them, all of them a little paler than the Indians proper, but of Indian type. They came up and stared at me, muttering to each other. I raised my head in the way the padres do when they give a blessing. I did this because they looked clean enough to be Christian Indians. But they knew neither the sign nor what I said to them in Spanish. They just gave back a little when I raised my hand. Perhaps they thought that I was going to fling a stone at them. Then they stared at me and muttered to each other. I stared

back, but all the time I was squinting out of the corners of my eyes lest one of these quiet-looking men should be creeping round to get behind me. I had the feeling that there was a man behind me all the time; but, as it is never well to show nervousness before these people, I did not turn my head. Instead of that I cocked my gun under my arm and pointed to the bull, which had just died. I smiled and signalled to them that it was at their service, speaking in Mosquito. They seemed to recognize some words of what I said, for they repeated them to me as though asking questions. I did not know what they said, for they were not Mosquitos, nor of that stock apparently.

I tried those mutterers with a few words of Chetumal (the only words known to me in the dialect), but they did not understand. Then I took out a Spanish piece of eight and offered it to one of them. He smelt it, looked at the stamp, handed it to the others, who either smelt it or bit it, and then handed it back to me, not knowing what to make of it. I began to get uneasy about those Indians after that. They did not look pleasant. They did not welcome me with the warm courtesy to which I had been accustomed among the Indians on the isthmus and at Blewfields. They stood still, looking at me rather pointedly, and muttering to themselves, without shifting their eyes. At last one of them, sitting down on the ground with a curious shrinking of his body, which made me think that he would

sink under the earth, began to play knucklebones by himself with great skill. It seemed a mad sort of a thing to do, and I did not like it, because I knew enough of the Indians to know that when they begin to do something which we think mad, they do something peculiarly Indian; and what is peculiarly Indian is often very horrible to us whites. I watched him playing. Indeed, I could not help myself, his pale hands were so apt and nimble, and the white and red of the bones—yes, some of the bones were red; the Indians dye bone and ivory with a kind of logwood which grows in fresh-water swamps—seemed to me to make a sort of pattern, which kept suggesting all sorts of things, strange things, things like the symbols in the book. Then something was suggested to me, something came into my mind. There came to me something like a word spoken inside my brain, something which you, perhaps, would call an intuition or some other absurd name, such as the English delight to make for things which they do not understand. The word said to me that the man was playing knucklebones to keep my attention fixed so that I should not look behind me. At the same instant I felt a cold gush of fear going over me, as one feels sometimes when, on looking back in the dark in a quiet alley, one sees or suspects some one whose footsteps one has not heard approaching. I turned round slowly on my heel, taking care to show no trace of anxiety. And there behind me was some one, a strange some one, right in

my tracks only six feet away. How he had come so near without my sensing him I cannot think; but the Indians are a strange people. We do many things with many sides of our natures. They do a few things with their whole strength. Perhaps that is why they can do things which we can never do.

IX.

The person who fronted me when I turned was dressed in one of those long black Indian print gowns, something like a soutane, something like an English labourer's smock, but all worked over with overlapping fringes of feathers, so that the wearer looks like a great blackbird. This one looked all the liker a bird, because his arms were folded on his breast, and so deeply buried in feathers that the hands could not be seen at all. I would have been glad to know what he held in those hidden hands; but with my gun ready in my hand I felt pretty much at ease on that score. After the first startled moment, during which I came near to shooting him, we stood staring at each other without speaking. I took a keen stock of him, and though I often saw him afterwards my first impression of him never changed. I never got over it, though very likely it was wrong. I felt as I looked at him that he was not quite a human thing, but something different and more dangerous. He was

a good deal paler than any Indian, but he was of Indian type, all except his mouth, which smiled at me continually, showing the teeth. It was the smile which awed me. I felt it to be something which masked the inner man. It was a pleasant smile enough, but as it gave me that impression of the mask it was sinister to me. The Indians on that coast never smile; perhaps it was the strangeness which made it so horrid. I cannot say. There it is. There was this about the creature's bearing. It made me feel that very much depended upon how I comported myself before him.

I had another intuition at that moment. Something outside myself (it was not my own will at all) thrust my hand into my pocket, and made me draw out a paper on which I had printed a copy of a symbol, the outline of a bird of prey, with which O'Neill often began his chapters of picture writing. I flattened it out and held it out to him, so that he might see it. He looked at it and bowed to it, evidently recognizing it, and then shuffled with his hands very quickly among his feathers. I suppose that he was hiding his knife, now that he knew me to be a friend He advanced a step, bowing and smiling. He pointed to one of the houses near by, and made as though to conduct me thither.

"Good," I said to myself. "I am not to be killed at any rate."

I nodded, and signed to him to lead on and that I would follow. The Indian led me into one of the houses,

and offered me a mess of bananas and corn-pone beaten up with the juice of limes. He talked to me garrulously in a dialect which I did not know. I noticed that he did not press food upon me in the true Indian way, which presupposes that a guest has not eaten for a week. I gathered from that (what I had in fact already gathered from their houses and from the quiet manner in which they had taken the arrival of a whole dead bull in their village) that these Indians did not live from hand to mouth as so many forest Indians do, but that they were partly civilized, with crops and perhaps live stock of their own.

After I had eaten, this strange Indian showed me, half grudgingly half expectantly, two or three other symbols carven in wood, or cut in pottery or painted upon a sort of brown cloth of a rather coarse but close texture, like a common holland. I recognized several of the symbols in O'Neill's books, but what they signified was double Dutch to me. I think from what happened afterwards that he confused me in some way with O'Neill, or took me to be the same kind of man. I nodded as though I understood them, and drew others with my finger upon the dried and dusty mud of the floor. He seemed impressed by my knowledge. He stood up with some ceremonial gesture like the saying of grace, and beckoned me to follow him out into the wood.

At a little distance upstream from the village there was a low stone wall, evidently very old. In Spain and

France I have seen Roman walls not unlike it. But this, unlike a Roman wall, was grotesquely carved, by some one with a rude and barbarous power, along its upper course of well-hewn, well-fitted stones. I do not know any carving which is quite like it, though some to whom I have described it have told me that it must be like Egyptian work. The carving was all symbolic and hieroglyphic. My guide pointed out several of the symbols known to me, and led me through a gap into what must once have been the courtyard of a great temple. It was a great smooth field of a place, over which the Indians had been busy ever since the last priest was there. It was all laid out now in tobacco and plantains in neat little weedless gardens. In the middle of the field (which I suppose was three hundred yards across) was the temple, picked so clear of creepers by the superstitious Indians that at first glance it did not look like a ruin. It was a ruin, but a very splendid one. It was carved all over its outer face with what seemed to be a writhing, continuous history. In places, where the rains had not been at work, some of the original colour was still upon the carving, to give the barbaric vigour of the design (as it seemed) a life and inner meaning

The man took me to the door of this great temple. It was so richly carved that it was as if the stone had bloomed suddenly like a strange plant. And do you know what was the first thing that I noticed there on

a clear space upon the door's lintel? I saw a name idly scratched with a knife point,—

L. O'Neill. Ship Wanderer.

My unknown friend had been there also. I bowed my head, as though I had just met him face to face. It seemed to me that he must be there, in the place where his wits had been so busy. I went into the temple, half expecting to hear him hail me.

The temple roof was gone, but the floor had been kept clear of weeds, and a neat thatch had been worked over the altar. An old Indian was praying before the altar, in a sort of trance of prayer; but at first I did not notice him. I saw only the exceeding wonder of the walls, which blazed in many colours. There was colour everywhere, either worked upon cloth or painted on the stone. The whole inner part of the building had been glorified, till it was like a jewel of many precious stones, with the hieroglyphics and many-coloured sacred histories. When I entered, the old Indian rose from his place by the altar and advanced slowly towards me, as though he had been expecting me.

"Buéno," he said, speaking Spanish, as though he had not spoken it for years. "Bueno. Que tal. Soy Nicolai."

He looked into my face for a long time, and then made me sit before the altar, while the other man, heap-

ing gums upon the altar brazier, made incense. When he spoke again, it was to say that he had waited a long time for my coming, a long, long time, so long that he had feared that he might die before I came. He told me strange things there in the gloom made by the incense. Strange things. Do you know what he told me?

X.

He told me that the temple in which I stood had once been the chief temple of the capital of that land. The city surrounding it had long since been covered by the forest, but he added that there were many vast remains to be seen by a little vigorous cutting. Those remains, and the village seen by me, were all that was left of so mighty a capital. As for the temple, he said, it was a temple to the ancient gods. Their worship had once been everywhere in the land, "as of course I knew" (I knew nothing of the kind), but that it had begun to die out even before the Spaniards came; and since then it had dwindled away almost to nothing.

This, of course, was all archæology. What was strange came afterwards. He said that, a year or two before, a word had gone forth among the Indians throughout Mexico. A sort of prophet named Xucal, an Indian of course, had prophesied that the old gods were coming back, and that the Spaniards would be driven out, and

that the ancient kings should rule again where their fathers had ruled. The prophecy said that this would not happen all at once. But that first a white man would come as a messenger from the kings, to find out whether the hearts of the Indians still remembered the old rule This white man would go about to all the places where the old faith had once been powerful. He would find out what relics of the race still lived, and whether they longed for their old rulers, who now were resting in some heaven (as far as I could make out) till he should make his report to them. After the disappearance of this white man (so the prophecy ran) a youth would appear at the great temple, and give the high priest a sign. This youth, I gathered, would be the great king, come back to rule his people, but (this struck me as being a very cunning stroke of the priest's), following the royal laws, it would be necessary for him to perfect himself in the sacred mysteries under the priest's tuition before he could rule.

Now perhaps Nicolai really believed me to be this youth; perhaps he thought that he might make use of my coming there, so soon after O'Neill's coming, to pretend it, for his own ends. At any rate, when he told me this, he suddenly acted as though I were a supernatural being. So did the other Indian, and so (later on) did all the other Indians in the village.

My first impulse was to tell them not to be so foolish; but a little thought came into my head. I asked myself

why I should not be this king. It was such an opportunity as no man in the world has ever had. Suppose (I said), suppose I take advantage of this prophecy, and play into old Nicolai's hands, and learn these mysteries, and turn the superstitions to use? Suppose I become this king in very truth, and call up the Indians, and make a nation where now there are tribes and Spanish tax collectors? With the Indians united, the veriest dunce at war could drive the Spaniards out of the country. Why should I not unite them and do so? This thought flushed me and captivated me. I do not think that anybody could take (unmoved) the prospect of being (at the one time) a sort of god, a king over millions of men, and the conqueror of Spain. I was moved strongly; and, like all men under strong emotion, I did not take heed. I did not think of the possible drawbacks to this scheme. I saw only myself an emperor, and the Spanish empire tumbled into Vera Cruz harbour. So, perhaps wrongly, I assumed a royal port, and allowed old Nicolai to proclaim me as the expected sacred youth.

I regretted it afterwards, for the learning of the mysteries is very terrible, for it begins with fasting and maceration of a very severe kind. After the body has been subdued, the novice learns other things; secret things, of which I will say this, that they are really wonderful, and that the Church in Europe knew of them, and condemned them long ago as magic. The mysteries were not all of the magical kind. As I be-

came more perfect, and learned to read the hieroglyphs on the temple walls and in O'Neill's books, I found that there was a higher ritual, of the spirit of which O'Neill, by the way, was entirely ignorant.

"Please," you say, interrupting. "Is there really any truth in magic?"

"Magic?" I answer. "Truth? A measure of it—yes. It is as true as pagan religion, and no truer. I sometimes think that it is a trick of the imagination; and at other times that it is more than that, but not much more. It is mostly a matter of secret rites and incantations, demanding, like other religious practice, a sincere faith. In all such arts much depends on little details and significances of colour and form and attitude. Some of the results are—you would not believe. You could not without knowing. But I tell you that if I had here certain precious colours, and some rare gums, and a sacred metal, I would bring before you visibly in this ship's cabin— There—I cannot tell you what, but something wonderful in mystical shape and beauty. Often there, at dusk in the temple, when the fireflies began to spangle, old Nicolai and I would light the gums and arrange the colours and display the metal, murmuring and singing strange words, terrible in themselves, till the night became to me or seemed to become a court, a palace, a hall, filled with immortals muttering wisdom.

But it was not enough that I should learn these secrets,

wonderful as they were, for they were known to others besides ourselves. Scattered about Mexico there are still some of the lesser priests who know these things; but they, in themselves, are but the grammar and dictionary to the higher knowledge. The higher knowledge I gathered was preserved at a college of priests on an island in the sea.

Nicolai told me that O'Neill, who had studied so deeply in all Indian lore, had heard of this island from the tribes near Ascension Bay, and had been eager to visit it, to get transcripts from the symbols in the temple, but could by no means learn of its whereabouts. The Indians refused to betray it. It was holy ground to them. As Nicolai believed O'Neill to be the heavenly messenger, he gave him the bearings of this island. I need only say now that it is one of the islands in the Gulf of Honduras; one of the Bay Islands, as the sailors had told me O'Neill, on some pretext, I fancy on the ground that the island might contain logwood, caused his captain to go to the island. When there he found and entered the temple, talked with the priests there, copied many of the symbols, without in the least understanding their mystical uses, and left rough records of them on the cotton roll which had come so strangely into my hands. O'Neill took up Indian studies as another sailor might take to carving, or playing on the flute. His business was to learn. He had nothing to do with understanding. He delighted only in facts. It

was very curious. His knowledge of facts helped most strangely to give me a knowledge of the spirit underlying them.

I told Nicolai that I knew where the island lay, and that I would go there to study. I think that I meant what I said, but by this time I was getting very weary of the project. I was tired of these endless, rather savage ceremonials, unbecoming in a civilized man ; and then I had the feeling that Nicolai and his friend were going to use me for some scheme of their own. I think that I would have given it all up, and gone back to logwood cutting, if I had not begun to take an intellectual interest in the occult. I put it like that, but really it was more than that.

XI.

One night I realized suddenly, as though a sunbeam had shattered within my brain, that all visible nature, colour, odour, and form is but the shadow of immortal nature ; and that that immortal nature is but the shadow of a higher spirit, and that perhaps at the college on the island I should learn how to use immortal nature magically, to learn of the spirit which it hid, as now I used colour, odour, and form magically to learn of it. There were wheels within wheels, magic within magic, wonder within wonder. And when I realized it, it was in my brain like fire.

After that began one of the strangest of all the strange things which happened to me. I was taken to the island like a true Son of the Sun. I was borne on men's shoulders in a litter, rowed by boatmen in a barge, and fanned by slaves, and fed by Nicolai the priest. We went in a great canoe up a mighty river, and as we voyaged they sang hymns to me. While they sang I lay at my ease among pillows, looking out at the water, and at foolish Indians who beat their heads on the ground as we passed. That journey (as perhaps Nicolai had intended) gave me a sense of what I might bring to pass among these people. I was accepted everywhere as the great king come back. I had heralds, who went ahead to prepare camps for me. I was treated like a god—I who had been a Jamaica slave. And always at my elbow was old, obsequious Nicolai, smiling and bowing and telling me what to do. One thing frightened me. All those Indians, out there in the wilds, two or three hundred miles from any Spaniard, had heard of me, and expected me, and made no doubt that I was the genuine king. Their faith and their organization frightened me. How came it that a forest tribe miles away in that ghostly temple of jungle should have heard what no Spaniard (as I am quite sure) had ever suspected?

It was a wonderful journey, such as no white man has ever done. It came to an end, three weeks later and five hundred miles away, on the low land of Sula, front-

ing the island. I was carried to a great canoe, manned by youths. They shoved off from the land, and burst out singing a melancholy whooping hymn, which they kept up for all the thirty miles from the mainland to the island. It was all about the Sun (that was myself) setting, in order to rise again more gloriously. They let me wade ashore in that very northern lagoon of O'Neill's map. Having watched me land they hastily put back again; while old Nicolai, not holy enough to touch the earth of that island, gave me his blessing from the stern-sheets.

I had been made to realize that the island was all of it sacred, like the very dwelling-place of the gods, and that the act of wading to it signified that even I had to approach it humbly. On landing, I thought it strange that no one was there. I made up my mind that this must be a part of the initiation mystery; so, after looking about, I raised my hand to the boat's crew, and watched the boat pass from the lagoon and out of sight. I felt some qualms when I saw the last of them. I began to realize that I had a hard task before me, and that now I had no Nicolai to prompt me. I was dressed in a queer sort of priest's dress. No doubt it was of the kind worn by the old kings, and very proper for a king upon his throne. But to me in a tropical island it was very uncomfortable.

I stood still for a full twenty minutes on the beach, wondering when the "savage guards" mentioned by

O'Neill would come to escort me to the priests. Nobody came. The island seemed empty of human beings; and yet, for all that I knew, all the scrub might be filled with watchers, anxious to see whether I acted like a true Son of Heaven. Indians like a man to be leisurely in all ceremonial matters. It would not do (I said to myself) to act rashly and unbecomingly. I waited on a little longer, and then stepped across the sandy beach.

O'Neill had marked "houses" near the beach, but none were there now. The scrub rose up dense and tangled like a wall across my path. I was not alarmed upon that account. If you have ever lived in the tropics, you will know how swiftly the stuff will grow over ground once cleared There are plants and shrubs which will grow a foot in a night. Three days will cover the site of a hut. A month will make the site like virgin forest. I said to myself that all the houses had been destroyed, so that I might find the temple by my own efforts. Before setting out upon that quest I made a discovery. I found a ruined boat-house among the jungle. I saw the end of a hewn bamboo, and guessed that it was part of a building. The plants had ruined both the building and the canoe within. They had spread along the crevices, lifting the roof from the rafters and the planks from the ribs, till all was split and rotten. How long ago it had been ruined I could not tell; possibly for only a few weeks. As I was turning away from this house I met with a shock. A skeleton

sat just within the door, propped against the door-post. It was the skeleton of an Indian, with a curiously flattened skull. His hand still held a lance with a flint head. He was the guardian of the boat-house, dead at his post.

I wondered how he died. There was no apparent cause of death. By his posture one would have said that death came easily to him. How he died was one of time's secrets, never to be discovered. I remember being touched at the thought that both the barge and the house had fallen into ruin with him; so that, as the Indians believe, he might have them by him in the spirit land. I was not frightened at finding this skeleton, but it gave me an awe. It gave me, in a way, courage to comport myself there like a man, and to take up (what I had thought of laying down) a great destiny prepared for me. I waited a little longer on the beach, hoping that a guide would appear. Then, finding that it rested with myself to reach the temple, I braced myself for an effort.

And then began what proved to be very difficult indeed: the search for the sacred college where so much wisdom lay hidden. It was somewhere in that island, but how was I to know where? The island is an irregular cone, sloping up, not very gently, to the hill-top which O'Neill called Sombrero Hill, because it is like one of those Don's peaked hats. I suppose that the whole island is four miles long, and about half as broad. In that compass is contained nearly every variety of land-

scape, from impassable cliff to impassable swamp. There are no roads nor native tracks into the interior from the coast. It is just a tangle of forest, often extremely dense, and so full of poison ivy and manchineels that a man must be careful how he cuts his way there lest the juices poison his face and hands. I remember standing on the beach of the lagoon, and staring ahead into the thicket, wondering where the sacred college could be. It was "hard to find," so O'Neill had written, nor could I "fetch it direct." But I knew from what he had said in his rhyme that it lay high up on the hill. What he meant by the Roncadores and the Key I could not imagine; *for Roncadores, which means "Snorers,"* is a name given pretty often by the Spanish seamen to reefs over which the surf breaks loudly. None of the myriad outlying reefs thereabouts was marked Roncadores on the chart, nor was there any sign to tell me which of the many sandy keys scattered about in the sea all round the island was the key the spur of which gave the bearing. You may think that it would be an easy thing to find a house in an island so small. But put yourself in the roughest landscape known to you, and imagine yourself seeking, at a pretty blind random, for something of which you did not in the least know the outward appearance You will realize then what kind of a search I had to make. When I came to look into the matter, I tell you that the difficulty, which at some times did not exist for me, sometimes daunted me. Still,

there it was. Standing there in the island at whatever point I cared to land, I was within three or four miles of one of the strangest places in the world.

I started then to look for the temple after working out a theory in my mind. I knew that as the bearings given were just less than one point to the east and west of north, the temple must lie on the north of the hill, fronting that northern side of the island. All that I had to do was to get well up on to the hill on the north side, and work out the bearings of the reefs and keys till I found a reef and a key the bearings of which fitted the instructions on the chart. I should then have to draw an imaginary line from each point to the hill, and search at the apex, or junction, of the lines, either up or down hill, till I found what I sought. I was filled with the notion that the temple would be a noble thing; in fine hewn stone like the temple in Campeachy. I did not expect to have much trouble in finding it if I could only get to the ground.

I had noticed when we sailed in to the anchorage that the hill had bald patches here and there, high up. I suspected that the temple lay in one of these, in a levelled clearing, shut in by a grove of sacred trees. I had a copy of O'Neill's map, a pocket compass, and a good machete with me, in spite of my kingship, and with these I felt confident. I braced myself, and struck out manfully into the darkness of the forest. My plan was to push along the northern sea-coast till I felt myself to

be abreast of the central part of the mountain. Then I meant to strike inland and to climb some tree, so that I could get a view of the hill, and if possible (if I were very lucky) of the temple as well. I did not expect to get to the temple till the afternoon. I was not sure of getting there that day, but that I should find it within twenty-four hours I was convinced. I did not know then that one who seeks for great things must prove his fitness for them by his endurance of difficult things.

I entered the wood as carefully as an Indian, stepping lightly, and covering my tracks, as one learns to do when one lives in the wilds. When I was well inside the wood I had to cut my way with my machete, in a sort of gloom which chilled me. There was not much visible reassuring life in the woods. No life of man, at any rate. The birds were not song-birds, the noises were not friendly noises. I would hear quavering, cracking noises from branches, rotted through, slowly giving way, and strange booming noises from the sea. Very strangely the noises came to me. There must be something dense in the air of forests, so that sound gets checked or softened in its passage. Another thing was strange, the silence of the live things. That part of the island seemed almost deserted. Now and then a rustle told me where a snake vanished. Sometimes a snake would drop from a branch like a rope flung down from its pin. Then, in some chance opening of the trees, I would see a blue patch of sky, and a silent bird would waver across it

into the blackness of the gloom beyond. And as I went I had again that feeling of being laughed at. I thought that the trees were spirits laughing at me, amused by my puniness even as I sliced them aside. Another thing which I felt was this: that I was in the midst of an abominable spawn of life; that vegetable life was all round me in horrible pulpy wealth; and that it was a question which should win—I with my wits and machete, or it with its juice and rottenness. I felt that every oozing sponge of branch trampled under was an enemy beaten, a menacing and stupid thing destroyed, a vile kind of life conquered.

After a time, however, as my arms grew tired with the continual cutting, I felt that this wild life was sapping my energy from me. I came to the track of a tornado, which had torn up the trees in an almost straight path across the island. They lay tumbled and tossed and piled upon each other five or six deep. They had rotted and died there; and the creepers had strangled them down, and the brush had sprouted through them, till they were a hedge of destruction, slippery with deathly things, funguses, poison-weed, and the scarlet squash, blistered like the wound it gives. Huge grey bladdery wasps' nests hung from the boughs of this ruin Bony, bare spikes, and withered stocks rose aloft like skeleton fingers, as perches for vultures, who brooded over it, like the mind of the place, sometimes flapping with their wings. It was such a place as you come to in a night-

mare, where the bulls are after you and your breath is failing.

I watched it for a moment, to make sure that the crossing creepers were not all snakes. It was a horrible place. It sloped away down to the sea, like a road of ruin, heaped with the wreck of trees. Below me about half a mile away was the sea, of a deep dark blue from the island's shadow, but often rolling bright over reefs and keys Above me the road of the whirlwind topped a rise, and vanished, in sharp, jagged outlines of boughs against the sky. Behind me was laughing forest, before me was crouched, attentive, watching forest. I believe that the forest was watching me, to see how I should cross that road.

When I had got across I stood still for a moment to mop my face. Twice in that passage I laid hold of boughs which writhed suddenly, coiling round my arm, and striking upwards swiftly. Both times I had shaken the snake free in time; and both times it had fallen on to a writhing mass, which I could see down below me in the grass, where that low kind of life festered and wallowed. What the world needs is a roaring bonfire to destroy those things; a forest-fire fanned by a trade-wind.

XII.

But I had had enough of climbing. I walked down hill after that to the flatter land nearer the sea. There I expected to progress more easily; even if there were no beach on which I could walk, I was pretty sure (so I thought) to find the scrub less dense as I drew nearer to the land's limits. When I got a little way down towards the sea I came out quite suddenly on to a bare level patch of sea-sand, covering the top of a little knoll about twenty yards across. It was sand of the small shingle kind, tamped down very tightly into a texture like cement, so that no weed of all that lush growth had done more than trail across its corners. What it was or had been I could not conjecture; but, from the comparative smallness of the trees near about, I guessed that the whole lower slope on that part of the island had been cleared, and kept clear until within, say, a year or two of my coming. I found afterwards that the sand had been brought there from a beach more than a mile away; but who did that heart-breaking work, and why it was done, who shall say? I dug at it with my machete, wondering if it covered anything, and then took a good look at the hill, the north side of which, from my perch on the knoll, lay open to me in all its waving folds of forest. One glance towards the sea showed me that there was no beach for me to walk along. Nothing but low cliffs, and piled rocks, and tumbled, confused boggy

bits made by land-slides. I fancy the slides were caused by the hill brooks fouling with vegetation, and wandering out to sea over a vast area in successions of stagnant pools, instead of directly in a channel. Parts of the undrained upper earth had been loosened by the water, till at last the whole collapsed, and fell towards the sea in a confused and filthy jumble, in which more stagnant pools soon formed, till the pools, getting head, burst on a little further. I tried to get on across this morass, but it was impossible. Each step took me up to my knees in foul water full of leeches, or in earth in its last degeneracy. There was a smell over all that place as of death. You do not know it yet, you boy, but that smell is everywhere where nature is left alone to her own luxury and waste. After staggering down and through it, leaping across pools of unknown depths of slime on to landings of yellow mud, and slipping and sticking, and going about to skirt cracks, where the earth, slowly settling, waited for a shock to make it fall, I got at last to the edge of the land. Here I could see the sea breaking down below me, not far below, upon rocks washed bare of earth; and little muddy strips of beach five yards across, and then heaped mud from a landslide, and rocks going out to sea in a reef like a great groin, and then brooks tumbling. Further on, about a mile and a half from where I stood, the sea inshore was deep, for the cliffs rose sheer, a hundred feet high, with a great surf washing up against them.

Above that cliff the hill rose finely and proudly, with a wrap, like smoke, curling and changing aloft upon him. The wind blew furrows along his side, bowing down the trees. A patch of red earth showed near his top, and then to the right of it a sparkling something, which for a moment I took to be the temple. A long look told me that it was not the temple, but either mica in a big patch, or water with the sun upon it. It made my heart leap, though, for the moment even to think that it might be the temple.

On I went, along the lower slopes near the sea, across that heart-breaking mud. The sun was now at high noon, the heat intense, the mosquitoes cruel, but still I pushed on, mindful of the prize. A roll of rocks hid a part of my road from my sight. I kept saying to myself that beyond those rocks the going would be easier. I do not know why this thought occurred to me; but when one is weary, on a bad road, very little will make one expect a speedy improvement. Ignorance is a great flatterer. It gives as true all that you wish to be true at the moment.

When I got to the top of that roll of rocks I found that I was on the upper edge of a land-burst. Beyond the rocks, and fifty feet below them, was an expanse of yellow viscid water, a river of it ten yards broad, dropping down to sea very much as half-melted glue would drop. A few grasses, rank and rusty, like horsehair, grew on the banks of this river. In the mud of the banks the

skeleton of a caiman was stuck. He had been caught in the glue-pot, poor brute, and starved to death. A little weedy driftwood caught among his ribs showed me that he had been there for some time. There was something medicinal or chemical in the water of that foul brook. It killed the vegetation near it. Where a flood had been the grass lay all dead and rotted, covered with a salt of yellowish crystals. There was no crossing such a brook as that. That way was barred to me.

I was loath to own myself beaten by Nature, but I was beaten then. There was nothing for it but to turn back to the track left by the tornado. From there, I said to myself, I would try to reach the hill by making a bee-line through the forest, as I had originally planned. But before I started inland from the track, after plodding thither through the mud, I sat down upon the little sanded knoll to rest and to think over my adventures, first repeating to myself a Spanish charm against fatigue. When I had rested I turned back up the line of the storm's path till I reached the great blistering squashes over which I had scrambled hours before. That gave me my course pretty accurately. I swung my machete again, striking into the jungle straight ahead of me. The blackness of the wood closed round me at once. The distant blowing of the surf seemed to be shut off from my ears. I was back again with primitive victorious nature, not defeated as the marshy land had been by its own contrariety, nor used as the sea was used by

man's inventions, but triumphant and terrible, a riot of horrid life, too strong for anything except gliding fat snakes which hissed and struck, and the unclean moths which haunted the darkness. I had the feeling that it was all intensely amused at my persistence. Those dark trees, infinitely tall, among the tops of which, far up, I could see at rare moments the gleam of the sun on the metal of the leaves, were all full of a fiendish glee at my endeavour. This feeling, which would have frightened most people, took from me the sense of solitude—of solitude terrible and destructive—which the woods foster in so many. I felt that I was not alone there, and that I with my machete was as much a conqueror as Alexander. I was conquering base kinds of life, slicing them away from the earth as a mower cuts grass, a dozen pulpy lengths of vegetable at each blow.

So I went on till, I suppose, five in the afternoon, when I stopped to rest. After resting I experienced what very weary people frequently experience, a greater sharpness of the senses on setting out again. When I set out into the wilds after my rest I was conscious of the noise of the surf, which I seemed to have neglected for an hour or two, and of another stranger noise which I could not account for. It was a kind of a whistling noise, yet not quite a whistle either, for it droned and drummed, and then went booming and crying aloud, sleepily, eerily, and with an insistence which made it seem like the humming of the earth as it revolved. It

was a noise which seemed all mixed up with the noise of the world, and a part of it, so that at last I found myself wondering why I had not noticed it before. Then it began to awe me, for there was a note in it which went to the heart. It was as though it had been going on for long ages, and had learned, oh, thousands of secrets which had happened there—strange secrets, secrets of what was going on under the veil of Nature, mystery and terror and delight—and now was crooning about them.

What it was I did not know, but I remember saying to myself that it was an Indian drum being played by a priest in an incantation. I have seen them like that, in front of a temple, or even shut away in their houses, beating on their bamboo drums with a gentle rhythm which went on, and died, and quickened, till it was not like drumming at all, but like the flowing of a sort of blood of music over a brain in which an individual is a thought or a half-thought, like personal annihilation, like a participation in all ecstasy. It needs the Indian life to make it all that—fireflies, and the moon coming, and the incense smouldering on the copper; but if I had an Indian drum here, and could beat long enough, as the Indians beat, I would take you out of your personal lives into the life into which all life ebbs at death You would be like little red leaves whirled along by a comet. You would see the world below you, spread out like a map, and the stars dancing past like golden

globes, and an air would race across your brain like a sweet fire.

I said to myself that where a magical drumming was there must be Indians skilled in their religion, which is little more than the practice of creating illusion magically. It occurred to me that I must be near the temple, and that this drumming must be a signal to me. Perhaps the high priests were there calling me to them. Perhaps, too, something more terrible was happening there. I remembered all the horrible Indian tales I had ever heard, of spirits taking possession of the dead, and walking in the disused bodies to do what they had to do. Perhaps the old priest's body was filled by something greater than life, which beat upon the Indian drum there, as the spider smears sweetness on the web to draw to itself a prey. In the forest there, with the unreality of half-seen things all about me, all things seemed possible. In the presence of so much strange nature one could not but believe in strange things which used the visible life as a foil or screen for their secret ends.

XIII.

It is a maxim with me that a doubtful thing is the only really evil thing. If one knows an evil, one can guard against it, or lose one's fear by combating it. If one knows a good, one can practise it, or lose one's fear by

defending it. But between those states one is timorous and wasted and self-questioning. I was not going to wait there in the gloom till my nerves took hold of me and destroyed me. I was going to have it out with my suspicions. I was going to know what it was which made that noise before the darkness came down and held me a prisoner with the terror it aroused. After a minute or two I decided that the noise was not really omnipresent, as it seemed, but coming from one quarter of the wood, a little to my left hand. I marched forward to that quarter, slicing down the trees with vehement blows which gave me courage. The noise grew louder as I drew nearer to what made it; but as it gathered force it changed to a shriller note, which was so like a bird's note that even I was daunted. For all the Indians I have ever met have a story of a bird-headed woman, who haunts the deep woods, and pipes with a clear throat to her prey till it comes within her clutch. The Indians say that she is very beautiful and great, but they fear her more than any of their gods When there is no moon she roams at night about the villages, singing to the men till a passion seizes them to go out to fling themselves to her. An Indian of Roatan told me that she had once brushed past him in the forest when he was late from hunting. Her eyes were flaming, like the yellow eye of an eagle, he said, and her bill was bloody from her feast, and she went past him swiftly, glancing aside, as a bird will, with alert,

quick twistings of her neck. She did not see him, only flitted by, crooning a little, with a blithe, inhuman chuckling, as though she were talking to herself. I confess that the piping within that murmurous music daunted me, when I thought of that twisting neck prying among the stalks of the lianes.

It was a less terrible thing which fronted me when I pushed through into the presence of the song-bird. I found myself at the entrance to a sort of natural basin, out of which a brook bubbled cheerily down. Inside the basin, which had been hollowed artificially (from what looked to me to be a rough limestone) as smoothly as the sea hollows a pothole, the water fell in a bright, curving, varying jet from a stone spout into a vast war-whistle. You may never have seen a war-whistle. They are huge hollow jar things made of earthenware, in all manner of uncanny shapes, with many mouths and stops. You pour water into them—the better if you pour it irregularly—and the water, forcing out the air through the stops, booms, gurgles, and pipes, making such a war-call as you would not believe, had you never heard one. This whistle before me was bigger and more cunningly made than any I had seen. It was so constructed that whenever it filled to the brim it emptied suddenly, with a quick sluicing, so that it would again fill and pipe as it filled. The note made by it varied very much, for there was some arrangement of a simple kind inside the stone spout, so that the volume of the

water in the jet varied, thus varying the force with which the air was expelled. I do not know how long it had been there. Probably for a long age of time. There were trailers of a green weedy stuff in the cemented channel in which the waste ran, and the spout was worn by the water to a blunted image of what it had been. I did not know at the time why such a whistle should be put in such a place Afterwards I found that there were several of them in different parts of the island, some of them so old that the spouts had broken away. The channels of them were choked and cracked by the pushing bindweeds and the canes. One of them (the oldest of them, by the crudity of its grotesques) was the biggest piece of earthenware I had ever seen.

These things were familiar to me later. Seeing this one for the first time gave me many reflections. I thought that it had been put there as a guard to the approaches of the temple, or perhaps as a guard to the water, which was pure, cool spring water, always a precious thing in such a place; or, it may be, as a propitiation and thank-offering, to keep the water always flowing there, even in the dry times. My rest by that spring, where the wit of man had been exercised so cunningly, was the pleasantest part of the day to me. I wondered what the slim brown artist looked like, and thought of, and how he spent his evenings, when he had washed away the dust of his masonry and gone home from work I wondered what he died of, perhaps

long afterwards, after visiting the mainland again and wandering in those hidden cities which exist, they say, in the forests somewhere, unknown to white men.

After my rest I walked on beyond the channel, only pausing to hone my machete when the continual chopping blunted it In another half-hour I came to what I afterwards called the wall, which barred my progress. I do not know what a scientific man would call it ; but it was as though all the lower part of the island, that part on which I stood and over which I had travelled, had been snapped off sharply from the upper part in a clean fracture, and thrust down forty feet below it. My part of the island ended suddenly at an abrupt cliff, forty or fifty feet high, above which the island went on as before. There had been some mighty convulsion there in the old days. The island had been torn across by a sudden collapse of half its bulk. Now, as a consequence, there was no getting from one end of the island to the other if one had no ladder.

At first I thought that I would be able to scale the cliff, steep though it was. This was not possible. I got up some little distance, and then, as the rock was very rotten, fell heavily, in a shower of grey shales, full of dust and old cocoons. I tried again in other places, but always with the same result. That cliff could not be scaled without a ladder. I went apart to the left, or south side, to see if the cliff gave or had fallen somewhere, but I found that it stretched on in a steep wall

as far as the eye could follow it on its march to the coast. I did not follow it to the right, for my sense of direction told me that I should soon come to the poisonous bog, or river, where the caiman had been caught in the mud. I pressed on further to the south, going down hill now, having crossed the island's central ridge. In a clearing of the wood I looked down and saw the flat land near the sea, crowned with noble timber, and the sea, grey with heat haze, trembling, and a gannet plunging. Something of the colour of sunset was deepening the brilliance One great tropical cedar, which was like a king there, glowed out like blood. Up there on the ridge the air was fresh. It had a salt, clean tang about it, unlike the dead air shut in the forest. I took great gulps of it to give me strength to go on. Out there in the sun, for I had the sun still, though soon the cliff would shut him from me, I had none of the fancies which haunted me in the wood. Only, as I went on and the sun drooped behind the island's shoulder, the cliff became sinister. It was so resolute and defiant, standing up there. It eyed me darkly. I kept saying to myself that it had the power to fall forward to crush me.

The sun was going down now. The woods flamed out into stronger colours. Scarlet spangles came upon the clouds and glowed to crimson and deadened to gold The birds cried, the air grew, as one might call it, tenser, as it does in the evening always, so that the

calling of the war-whistle mellowed the birds' crying, making it a part of itself, a part of the beauty of twilight. A sudden bend in the cliff wall brought me face to face with the rock, which till then had lain on my right hand. A glow of light, as red as firelight, lay fading upon the wall, to show me a sudden change of surface to some harder stone, hewn here to a narrow, triangular doorway, lit by the glow to a little distance within.

XIV.

I was not startled by the presence of the door. It seemed to me that my guardian spirit, after bringing me thus far, wished to give me shelter for the night. Perhaps, looking in the glass of the future, she had seen my coming across the generations, and had caused some long dead Indian priest to hew this cell for me, so that I might rest (saved from the dews and the fever) where of old he had rested. He had been dead a long, long time that Indian, so long that the mat at the door which no snake will ever pass, had fallen to dust. The dust lay pure and dry upon the sill, with fragments of hair still unrotted in it. Within, a few dead leaves lay ungnawed by the slugs. The whole of the cell glistened with mica spangles. The floor was sanded. In one corner, where the light made it plain, the sand was rather deeply printed by a tiny footmark (I supposed

that it was made by a woman's foot). It was the print of the right foot of some one leaving the cell.

Long ages had dimmed the sharpness of its outline. Particles of sand had fallen, so that the lines of the foot could not be read; but it was still eloquent of its maker, that print in the sand. She had been of some higher race than the Indians. She had been accustomed to wear sandals, as I could see from the peculiar separation between the great toe and that next to it, caused by the passage of the sandal-thong. In height she had stood about five feet, perhaps not quite so much. I could not help feeling that she had been delicate and beautiful, with the high, austere, wise beauty of those who pass their time in meditating upon spiritual matters; but whatever she had been, she was dead now, and long blown away in dust by the trade-winds, beauty and wisdom together.

There was a shrub of torch-wood near the cave. I tore down a great dead branch of it, and lit it with my flint and steel. With this in my hand I passed over the threshold into the cave, telling myself that I was going into the presence of that dead woman, and that I must be reverent there, because she had been beautiful and good

Striking the end of my torch into the sand I looked about me. The cell, like so many Indian cells, was shaped in something of the pyramid fashion, about seven feet high by ten broad upon the floor. Nearer

to the top it was much narrower, of course, owing to the housing in of the walls. Care had been given to the walls. They had been polished, and then covered with a kind of hard, well-dried plaster, upon which the priestess had painted symbols in blue and yellow, to say that she was a priestess of the truth. She had been born, she said, in the year of the great earthquake at some place sacred to water (thus I read it), and many secrets had been made known to her by the charity of many spirits. Her water-jar, painted with grotesques, lay to one side, with one of those well-worn flat stones which the Indians make hot in the fire, so that their maize cakes when rolled out upon them may crisp into cracknels at once. This they use instead of baking. A second covered jar contained the roughly crushed maize-flour, or pounded corn, which they make on their querns. A third, tightly closed, contained maize cobs, from which the corn had all fallen. There was an inner chamber to the cell. To reach it I had to stoop to all fours, for the door was very low and narrow, like a little passage. Inside there was a rather larger room, dark and austere, with a higher roof. An altar of stone lay across one end of it, and something lay upon the altar, covered with some very old worn Indian linen. I did not touch the linen, for I knew that the altar had served this priestess for bed, and that she lay dead upon it now, the sacrifice of her life complete. My foot struck upon something hard, which clattered. It was a little heap of

earthenware plaques, painted with symbols. Taking them up to examine them, I saw that they were bound together by fine gold clips into a sort of breastplate or corselet. She had worn them over her robes of ritual, I believe, in solemn incantation. I know that some visionary Indian priests see symbols in their dream. By symbols, I mean arrangements of line and colour capable, mystically, of suggesting emotions and images to the mind of any attentive person beholding them. Each symbol seen by the visionary is therefore a thing of power, by which he can influence his fellows. These are revealed only after strict discipline in meditation. As a poet, by striving towards excellence, becomes a fit receptacle for excellence, so one of these priests, ever meditating upon occult wisdom, is rewarded by the gift of it. I have known Indians who added fresh symbols to their mystical robes after each vision, till they were hung with the evidence of their wisdom from their neck to their heels.

I picked up the little corselet sadly, knowing that it was the record of a life's meditation These few round plaques of earth, not well baked, and rather cracked now, so that the paint had scaled upon them, were the book of the priestess. If I had understood the message of the hieroglyphs upon them I should have understood her too, and known what manner of woman she had been. I went out from that chamber of death into the outer chamber, where I lit a great fire upon the

hearthstone. Before the light faded I found the spring whence she drew her water so long ago. Drawing some I put her pot to boil, laying plantains in the embers to roast, and shredding them into the pot, to make that pleasant drink called mishlaw, which is as refreshing as coca. Darkness came upon the world before my meal was cooked; but I did not fear the dark. I piled on more wood to make a blaze, and ate my food in the glow of it, staring out into the blackness of the forest, where the branches moved continually, making a murmur as though they were strange birds passing over the stars. Long I stayed there, staring into the night, till at last sleep took me and I drowsed away into dreams and more dreams, in that dim old cell of the priestess, where immortals had once moved and called to the something hidden in human flesh.

XV.

I am not given to dreaming as a general rule, but my walk and my excitement made me dream strangely that night. My dream was not like common dreaming, in which the dream dominates the personality; but wonderful and kingly, my own self, awake and strong, directing my own actions. When I say that I dreamed I express myself badly. I should say that I woke up into a new and vivid life, more splendid than this, a

life of intenser colour and finer ecstasy, in a world conducted by another intelligence and governed by other laws. It was, as I suppose, the real world, of which this world is nothing but the passing shadow. I woke up, then, in the cave where I had fallen asleep, but I woke up into its reality. The walls of hewn stone were changed to opal in which fire burned. The fire on the hearth was like visible music. I cannot describe the beauty of the flame in any other way. The trees outside stood like an array of knights in mail. Their fruits were like lamps, their leaves like jewels. The plaques which lay beside me coloured and took life. Upon a shelf on the wall, which I had noticed, a monstrous serpent began to stir from what looked to be a curled string. His scales grew erect, his head raised itself, moving from side to side, with a glittering of obsidian eyes. On the other side of the cell, from another shelf, another snake arose. The two together hissed and swayed, growing larger and larger, till their blue-black bulk seemed to surround me and surround me, while the rattling of their sistra began like the beating of drums. I knew that the beating of the drums, or the sounding of a rattle, is a priestly duty in all great temples before the god appears. It is one of the means of calling upon him at the commencement of an evocation. I was lapped about by these great snakes, and lulled by the calling of that rattling, till the earth had all fallen away from me, and I was aloft somewhere, removed from

my body, looking down on it all as a star looks down in the daytime, unseen by man.

Louder the rattling came, till it was like a laughter of the earth itself, like a shaking of the ribs of the world. In and out of the noise of the rattling, the hissing of the snakes, mingled with the piping of the war-whistle, made a kind of pattern of lighter music. It was like some dancer, some bright, delicate woman of sound, stepping on a sombre floor. Then, in the middle of the music, the inner wall parted with a crash, and I was within, touching the altar, which glowed red like a great pulsing ember. It was like a heart, contracting and expanding. It was an ecstasy to touch it; for it was no longer a slab of rock for sacrifice. It was the very heart of the goddess which received the sacrifice. The figure hidden by the cloth was no more the body of the priestess The cloth which had covered it fell aside so slowly that I could see the broidered birds upon it, and note how the tips of their wings were orange. For an instant I saw the thin body, covered with the death-wrap. Then the withered thing surged up into life. It was as though a hot sap passed through the veins, filling the dried-up channels. I saw the wrap upon the arm tighten as the life swelled the veins. The cloth burst and shredded up into dust, and changed to a soft white stuff, spangled with the green-gold wing-shields of the sacred beetles. The arms showed firm and living. The figure rose slowly, full of life and power; glowing with life that

was like an internal fire, visible and tangible to me. She leaned forward and took my head between her hands. It was as though arrows were darted into my brain. She drew me up for one instant; and then, with an intolerable pang, the cave and altar were flung to fragments about me in one scattering burst, and I was standing, shaking and gasping, on a barren patch upon the hill-side, amid a noise of the piping of war-whistles and the droning of drums. Soon these died away and it was all still, so still that I could look about me. I was on the hill, looking over the island. It was all spread out below me like a map, but rather dark as yet and unformed, so that I could only tell where I was by the gleaming of the lagoon where we anchored, and the sight of the hill peak below and above me. I had no sooner said to myself, "It is dark now, and still morning, but presently the sun will come," when the light quickened upon the sea, and advanced in a charging golden army over the waves, touching them all to splendour, making them fiery and fire-flecked. The light grew upon the island, ruffling up over the dunes, over the forest, over the hill, till all was rapturous with light. Looking down at that moment, I could see the surf flashing on the reefs, and two great bursts of seas toppling to right and left. Over went the sea in a smash of foam, the white spread out and passed, and the sea gathered again, and again burst, till those white masses were stamped on my brain as clearly as though they had been seared there

with a brand. Looking round I saw behind me a cone of rock grotesquely carved into the likeness of an angry man. It seemed to put out its tongue at me while it revolved, and then suddenly I was standing in a dim place, like a mist, out of which grand, elemental shapes advanced and faded, gleaming with all colour, sweet with all odour, rhythmical with all music, clanging, and crying out, beaked and horned and scaled. For an instant I stood among them, rocking with the drunkenness of an incense which was hot to breathe, like flame: then the elementals faded, and I was back before the altar, feeling my life sucked from me, and the glory passing and passing and passing, till, with a little quick twitch, as though a hand had pulled a curtain, it was all gone, and I was lying in the cell again by an almost dead fire, watching the cool dawn beginning to give a greyness to the trees.

I knew that I had looked upon the temple. I knew its whereabouts. I had seen the marks of the map in those two bursts of water. That red cone was its door. It was from that that the bearings had been taken. If I had seen the place a thousand times I could not have known it more clearly. There was the spur. There were the Roncadores. It was all mapped out in my brain in letters of light. I sprang from my place by the hearth, crying out that I would find the temple that day before the sun set. I was still flushed by my dream. My brain was all whirling and singing

in me. Something more strong than life was surging like a wine in me. It was something of a shock to me, on going within to the altar-cell, to find the place all dead and still, faded to a dusty greyness again, with a shrivelled figure beneath the cloth, lying on a cold stone slab. On the walls, too, in the outer cell, the snakes turned to two mosaic snakes, roughly drawn in high relief, and stuck about with torquoise and obsidian. The dust lay unstirred everywhere, and there was the printed footmark in the sand.

I passed out from the cell, and down along the cliff wall towards the sea. The air came freshly to me. There was a brightness on the forest which had been so black and hateful to me only the day before. Soon I came to a place where the cliff was all fallen over in a jumble. I gave a great shout when I saw that. Soon I had climbed to the upper half of the island, laughing to think that behind me I left all my past, all my doubts, all my labours, all my anxieties. I was going on, now, to knowledge and certainty.*

I kept well up hill, steering by my compass, getting stray glimpses of the hill-crest to correct my course. The wood was thick; but as I drew further up hill the

* I found out later that two of O'Neill's guiding marks were behind me. The "Scree" of his doggerel was merely the place where the cliff had fallen. The "Stone Virgin" was near the southern coast, on the fringe of the forest there, well within that lower half of the island which I despised now. Above the cliff none but priests were allowed to go. This, as I say, I found out later.

brushwood became thinner, so that I could walk without using my machete. The trees were very old and grand. On one of them I saw a "blaze," or square cutting in the bark, upon which had been graved very clumsily something like a swastika mark. Almost at the same instant I caught sight of a lump of carved stone, all grown at the top with grasses, lying to my right, at a little distance from my track.

I said to myself that this must be O'Neill's third mark, the old king's tomb. It was not a tomb, as it happened: it was an altar, of the kind which, among the Sisal Indians, they call Kuey. It is a mass of carved stone, with little niches in it, in which the gods (and the sacrifices) used to be put. This one here and one near Sisal are the only ones I have ever seen.

There now remained only two marks to find, the drinking-cup and the brook. Keeping straight up the hill I came to a tangle of broken earth in which the trees, though growing, sprang from the ground in all sorts of queer twists and contortions. Fifty years before the whole of that side of the hill had slipped from its seat and sprawled away, with its shaggy fell of jungle, till firmer earth had checked it. The landslide had settled there, and the old lush tropical life had gone on again, with the trees at odd angles, just as they had fallen when the slip began. Many old seeds, brought to life after long burial, were sprouting and vigorous there above the grasses which had hidden them, perhaps for

centuries. I think that this often happens in the tropics. A strong straggling plant takes hold and covers up many weaker plants from sight, and rots above them, shutting them up in a compost of earth too thick and hard for them to burst. Then, it may be centuries later, something knocks away their compost, and out comes the old crushed life, budding and vigorous, with its strange blossom and stranger fruit (unlike anything left in the world perhaps), to puzzle the scientific expert.

In this broken part of the hill I had great difficulty. The going was very bad indeed, and something in the plants under foot seemed to please the mosquitoes, which rose in swarms at each step. I think that those mosquitoes could have bored through steel plates with those bills of theirs. Nevertheless, I kept on as well as I could till I came to a flat part of the hill, where there was a rough stone block carved in high relief, with legs, which supported a rude stone trough or cup. I suppose it measured about four feet across at the top by three feet deep. It was pierced at the bottom with an outlet hole. I do not know for what rite it had been made It was an uncanny looking thing, like a big mushroom, the fruit of which had been turned topsy-turvy. I guessed that this was the drinking-cup of which O'Neill had spoken. A brook, the brook of the rhyme, ran past this curious thing, and away gaily northwards. Five minutes later, as I was following down

the course of the brook, I stopped to listen to the murmur of the war-whistles, which boomed from all round me loudly, as though there were an orchestra of them playing a concert for me. I caught sight of something in the grass, a block of iron-bearing earth of a dull rusty colour. A few steps further on the wood ceased abruptly and there was an outcrop of iron blasted pretty badly by repeated lightnings It ran on level for a few yards, and then dipped sharply down into a valley that was like a natural theatre. One glance into the crater from the rocks on its upper brim showed me that it was the place of my dream, the place to which I had been so strangely directed through so long a time.

I slid down the side of the crater (it was as like that as anything else), over broken reddish stones and rubbish, into the flat part where I had stood in my vision. Still, I could not understand the loneliness of the place. There was neither man there nor recent trace of man. There in the centre stood the cone of iron-rock, carved grotesquely into the likeness of a man's head. It had stood there perhaps for centuries and centuries. I seized the protruding tongue and thrust it back into the mouth. Something grated and clicked below me, a slab of rock shook and swung aside, leaving in front of me an oblong opening in the earth, with stairs leading downwards in a gentle decline. They were stone stairs, carved at the sides with symbols. All down that carven staircase, ranged in order, were war-whistles, fed by some

perpetual spring. The jet leaped into one jar and filled it, making it cry aloud. Then the filled jar ceasing to cry, emptied itself by the weight of water within it into the second jar, so that there was always a droning, booming, whistling noise there, and will be, I suppose, always, till the simple mechanism is checked or broken. I do not know how these things are done. They are arranged quite simply, so an Indian told me, by a regulation of the weight of water required to force round a stone revolving in a pipe.

XVI.

When that temple was laid bare before me I did not think of the secrets of the water-pots. I thought only of what lay beyond, down in the dimness there, in the open space of the floor. The floor sloped down between an array of carven figures, kings and queens of the dead, who stood on each side solemn as Egyptian figures, grander than living figures, with brows crushed back and lips protruding and their tongues transfixed by briers. There was a glimmer upon all these carvings. They were hung with golden plaques made of the very soft pure gold which can be bent by the fingers. There was more gold there on those carvings than any man has seen at one time since Cortes saw the Mexican treasure, or Pizarro the ransom of Atahualpa. There was gold enough there to build a navy. It glinted all down the

temple, a marvel of gold-worker's art, the worth of a kingdom.

I waited, there in the temple, for some one to appear; but no one came The water gurgled and droned in a rhythm subtly arranged. I kept telling myself that there were voices speaking among the noise of the water; but there were no voices, only water falling and trickling and collapsing, and a piping note wavering and tolling. No one was there. I was alone in the temple.

I stood upon the lowest step of the stairway, and called aloud thrice in Sotek to say that I had arrived; but no one answered. My voice went booming about among underground hollows, making queer noises which startled me. I waited, looking about me, straining to pierce the gloom beyond; but seeing nothing except the ranged jars and the array of kings, stretching down into darkness. I said to myself that all this silence was prearranged to try me, and that it was nothing, and that whatever happened I was not to show alarm. I waited for some time longer, and then, with my machete in my hand, I advanced into the gloom, rather glad that I had the good sunlight behind me in case I wished to run away.

I had not gone more than a few steps into the darkness when my foot struck something which had a human feel. I pulled it out into the light. It was the skeleton of an Indian, or of some one of some kindred stock, for the brow had been flattened artificially. It was lying

on a vestment of painted linen. A sacrificial knife, studded with turquoises, was slung about his neck by a gold chain. The bones had been gnawed by rats a good deal. It gave me a shock to find this skeleton in the temple. I could not understand its presence there. It did not frighten me. Why should it? I am like that myself inside this flesh But it puzzled me a good deal. I was puzzled still more when I found further on other skeletons lying in disorder all along the temple, away from the light. Then it dawned on me that the temple was a royal mausoleum, and that here were the bones of all the Sotek kings, and that I had been sent thither so that I might meditate upon mortality before coming to the throne.

"If that is so," I said to myself, "I will meditate; but I do not understand this disorder, nor why I should have been left alone to find this all out by myself."

I think I should have been quite at ease had I not found other things among the skeletons. The bones of rats They set me thinking.

For, when I was in Jamaica during the plague, I noticed that the rats came from their holes and ran without fear (having the infection on them), and dropped dead even in crowded rooms or in churches When I found the skeletons of rats among these kings, and remembered this, I could not help thinking. I began to get uneasy. It came into my mind that all these skeletons wore priestly tokens—symbols, or sacrificial knives,

or the golden brier of maceration—never kingly tokens, such as crowns, or sceptres, or swords. It was easy to say that priests would be likely to value their kings rather as defenders of the faith than as rulers or soldiers; but the thought began to grow upon me that there had been a pestilence, and that the priests had died, there in the holy place, and that these were their skeletons.

"Corruption," I said to myself. "It is impossible. The air is sweet here, and besides, the natives on the mainland would know if there had been a pestilence."

But I knew all the time that it was not impossible. The ants, which were everywhere, would soon cleanse the bones of a body. The temple drew air from other sources than the door; while, as for the natives, it was probable that they never came near the place, except to land their kings and novitiate priests. They may go there for great religious festivals; but about this I am not sure. It was when I remembered the dead guard by the boathouse that doubt became certainty. I went up the steps into the light, saying that pestilence had fallen on the island, and that the priests had been destroyed by it. As I went up the steps I had a fancy (perhaps it was more of a hope than a fancy) that when I came out into the light I should find the amphitheatre full of people, waiting there for me to welcome me; but no, no one was there. It was just as it had been. There were the trees, the wind-ruffled trees, and the surf going over the reefs. All else was still, still as Nature can be.

The droning of the pipes only seemed to make it more still. Suspicion came to me then that perhaps I was alone on the island. The guards and priests were perhaps all dead of plague. I was perhaps the only living human being within half a degree.

XVII.

I am not going to worry you with my sensations. They were ugly. Before I gave way to them altogether I cut and lit some torchwood, and stuck great blazing brands of it all down the temple. I wanted to find out if anybody were still alive there. What I saw left me no doubt that the college of priests had been extirpated. Even the cells where the priests had worked were full of death. One body lay bowed over a roll of painted cloth. His brush was still in his hand. He had died, as I could read, while describing in hieroglyphs the progress of the plague among the priests There, by his side, were little terra-cotta pots of pigments, intensely bright, and a list of the priests, half of them ticked off with the death symbol. It was frightful, but the pathos of it moved me more than the fright. There were great rolls of painted cloth in the cell there It had been the scriptorium. The rolls of cloth contained the secrets of the higher ritual, which now, as I supposed, would never be practised on earth again.

I got out of that house of death, and sat down in the sun to think. Plainly my scheme of becoming King of Mexico, in fulfilment of the prophecy, would have to be abandoned, unless I could see Nicolai and concert a plan. And how could I see Nicolai? Probably everybody in the island was dead; and how was I to get to the mainland? And even if I were to reach the mainland, how could I find Nicolai? Probably he had gone back to the temple at Toatlan, to wait till I came, in the care of the high priests, to be anointed and crowned. And how could I get to Toatlan, five hundred miles away? If I went ashore (I thought) unaccompanied by the high priests, it might be said that I was rejected by them, and then a dig with a bone spear would very quickly end me. And even if I were to reach Toatlan, then that old schemer Nicolai might make me king by fraud. I was willing enough to be king, provided that I had qualified myself before the chosen brains of the race; but to be king by the wiles of that old fox was unfitting and distasteful to me.

The more I thought the less clear the issues seemed. And sitting there in the sun gave me a headache, so that I had to plunge into the sea. The place began to seem so unreal to me that I doubted whether the shock of cold water would not wake me It was all dream-like and strange, all this gold, and the chance of the kingdom, and O'Neill. O'Neill must have been a fine man. He had looked on all that gold and spurned it, respecting

the faith which put it there. He had gone from its presence to the society of pirates, and never once mentioned it to them. He had been content to have seen it, and to have copied the symbols on the walls above it, symbols which he did not even understand. He had been the guest of the priests, and had had the strength to respect that bond between them. I admired that reverence. It was like an Irishman to have done that. A word to his captain would have made him a rich man. What could the guards have done against white men with guns? But he had never spoken that word. He had gone away when the ship sailed, and had died soon afterwards, despised probably by his shipmates for poring over symbols and Indian rubbish instead of getting drunk on caña.

XVIII.

As I walked to the beach from which I started I called repeatedly, hoping that some one would reply. Nobody answered me. It was evident truth that the island had been smitten by the plague, and that every human soul was dead. I was alone there with their bones, and might be alone there, for all I knew, till my bones lay with theirs. I told myself that only one white man's ship had ever been there in the past, and that no other would ever come to take me away. I kept re-

peating this, I remember, as my head grew worse; for to tell the truth I was sickening for the plague. I remember saying too that what I wanted was a ship to take me to Nicolai. The fever was gaining on me, and as I became light in my head I felt the need of some one by me to look after me. Nicolai had looked after me. He was in my head continually. I remember getting to the beach, calling out for Nicolai, and trying to undress for a bathe. After that it is very misty and fiery, with comings and goings and noises distinct and indistinct.

A ship happened to put in there, I suppose two days later, when I had passed the worst of it. She was in search of turtle. I was lying on the beach, with a ring of vultures round me waiting for me to die. Every now and then one of them would hobble a few steps towards me, and I would move or shift, and then he would go back again. But of all this I knew nothing whatever. What was wrong with me, so they told me afterwards, was not the plague; but it was yellow fever. My face was the colour of a canary. The men didn't mind yellow fever. They had seen enough of it to know that it isn't caught by man from man, so they dropped me into a boat and took me to the ship. They put to sea after that. And by-and-by I got better.

By-and-by I got better. By the time the ship was up with Cape Catoche I was about again. And when I knew that they were only smugglers, bound to smuggle

goods into Virginia, I thought that—well, I thought a foolish thing. I thought that perhaps their Captain Pointer would turn to the Lagoon of Tides, so that I might talk with Nicolai. When I asked this privately of Captain Pointer, he wanted to know why I was so anxious to get to Campeachy instead of coming on with him as his navigator. That was natural enough. He had saved my life and given me a passage, and he had a right to know. But I was a mysterious person. I had been discovered by chance upon the beach of an uninhabited island. I had been dressed in outlandish clothes, and outlandish gear had been found upon me, books of pictures and Indian writing. He wanted to know more than I cared to tell.

"Very well," said Captain Pointer. "You want to go to Campeachy? I don't want to pry into what isn't my affair, but what were you doing on that island?"

"Studying Indian antiquities," I said.

"And what do you want to go to the lagoon for?"

"To see a friend."

"A native?"

"Yes."

Of course the friend was a native. No white people live at the lagoon. They stay there to cut wood, and then load it and go.

"You must be powerful fond of natives," he said, "to

want to go seven hundred miles to see one. What do you want to see him about?"

I have always held that entire frankness is a good thing. If you take a man entirely into your confidence he must be more than base to betray you. It is the highest compliment that you can pay to him. But being frank and betraying a secret are different matters. I had no right to betray my secret; and to tell the truth, Captain Pointer, being something between a pirate and a smuggler, was by no means the man for honest dealings. I did not think of him with any pleasure as my confidant.

"Important business," I said.

"Money in it?" he asked.

"Perhaps," I answered. "I am not sure. That is why I want to see him."

"Say," he said, harking back to the old scent, "what antiquities were you after in that island? Is it in the island, this business of yours?"

"No. In Mexico," I answered. "In Chiapas."

"I see," he said. "What do I get for my trouble in case I take you to Campeachy? Am I to share in the business, or am I to be paid?"

Now I knew that Nicolai could get gold dust literally by the bucketful just for the asking—the Indians value it less than coin. So I said that I could not let him share in the business, nor hear of it; but that if he took me to the lagoon, and if when there I found my friend,

who might of course be dead or absent from home when the ship arrived. I would guarantee him ten pounds' weight of gold, or that failing, engage to serve him as a navigator for a year without pay.

"No," he said. "As you say yourself, your friend might be dead or absent, and then I wouldn't get the gold dust. I could do without your navigation all right. But I couldn't do without the gold. No; it's not good enough business. Tell me what your business is, and promise me a share in it—I know it's pretty good, or you wouldn't be so anxious about it—and perhaps I'll go out of my course, if I think it's worth my while. Otherwise you're just a beachcomber, to whom I'm giving a passage in exchange for services. You've told me that you've got no money, so I'm letting you work your way. Well, I'm a coast-runner, with a cargo to put ashore in Virginia. Treat me as a friend, and I'll be a friend. Treat me as an ordinary captain, whom you're afraid to trust, and I'll be that. It's purely a business question between us if you aren't going to tell me more."

XIX.

I could see that the mystery had excited him. I could see the workings of his mind. Here was I, suddenly discovered alone on one of the Bay Islands. What

was I doing there? Now, a week or two later, I was feverishly anxious to see an Indian in Chiapas. What did I want with him, and what connection was there between the Indian and the island? For a moment I hesitated. I very nearly told him something of the secret, then I decided that I could not.

"No, captain," I said. "It's not my secret. I can't tell you what it is And, until I see my friend, I can't even tell you whether there is money in it."

"All right," he grunted. "Then we go on to Virginia." He waited for some while, and then asked me rather slyly how I had come to the island, and what the antiquities were like.

"I went there from Sula," I said. "The Indians took me across in a big canoe. I have been studying the Indians for some time now. As for the antiquities, there are a lot of old war-whistles, a lot of skeletons, and a stone altar with niches in it."

"And nobody living there?"

"No; they are all dead. The island has been attacked by the plague, I think,"

"And your Sula Indians? Didn't they stay? How came it that they left you alone there?"

"The island was uncanny to them. They were superstitious about it. You know what Indians are"

"And how were you going to get back to Sula?"

"I expected to be put ashore there by the islanders."

"Free of charge?"

"Why not?"

He shook his head, unconvinced. "None of my business," he said. "But I don't think you're being frank with me. I've treated you above board, and none of your things has been so much as touched by any man here. But there's something hidden." He went on deck, evidently hurt. After that he treated me coldly.

When we lay at Charleston, selling our contraband, the *Marie Galante* lay at anchor near a turtler. Captain Pointer made friends with some young men aboard her. They came aboard to dine with him. During dinner, as they became drunk, they asked me many questions about the Indians, which I answered without betraying myself. I thought them very rude and tactless, but this I put down to their parentage, and to the punch. Thinking it over now, when it is all rather dim, I believe that I had some half plan of confidence in Captain Pointer. Perhaps, even had I done so, the end would have been the same.

I noticed that after this dinner the man was more polite to me. I put it down to a desire to make up for the rudeness of his drunken guests We cruised north along the coast, putting our contraband ashore. Lastly, after a successful cruise, we put into a creek in Accomac where we opened a market among the farmers. We were short of meat in the *Marie Galante*. So, after putting a lot of goods ashore, Captain Pointer asked me if I would go cattle-hunting with some of the hands

who had been buccaneers. I wanted a run ashore. I went.

You will say, "Oh, but you must have been mad to go away from the ship, leaving your papers behind you." It was foolish. But, remember, I had been very ill; so ill that my ambitions were dulled in me. I do not think that I was excited about the island, nor really eager to go to Nicolai. It was all a little blurred and unreal. I had not made up my mind whether to go on with the scheme, or to let it fall and start another. I wanted to rest awhile. Fever is like that. It kills your energy for a time. It kills your power of decision. And then, I had no living distrust of Captain Pointer. I did not think that he would rummage my chest. I do not think even now that he was that kind of man, unless inflamed by drink or company. I suppose that it was one of those young men, putting together my ravings about gold, the mysterious rhyme on the map, and perhaps some Indian legend, who moved Pointer to his action. There. It cannot matter now. While I was ashore, Pointer received some final prompting. Whatever it may have been, he decided that he would go to the island with his new friends. The rest you know. And you know, too, how a man will care little for a thing till something threatens it or robs him of it, and how then he will risk his life to save it. It was like that with me, then. I wanted to save that island. It was a sacred island. One would save anything sacred

from human brutes. And then, the threat stirred the longings in me. . . . Old Nicolai and the religion and the kingdom. It might be, I thought. I might be king there. It was not a dream. I might do what the Spaniards never did. . . .

THE END OF LITTLE THEO'S STORY.

PART THIRD.

CHARLES HARDING'S STORY.

(*Continued from page* 113)

I.

I LEFT off, as it were, with my hand on the sheer-pole. At that instant the trouble began.

Just as I stood in the chains, about to spring aloft, I heard a crackling and trampling in the scrubby wood ashore. The hands were just then beginning to strain about the capstan, tautening our warp; I could see them all breasting the capstan bars, heaving hard, so that a ripple of way came brokenly from the bows. Far up the creek, under the clump of red cedars to which the warp was taken, three or four hands were putting off to us in the boat. Up aloft above me the top-gallant sails, set as course and topsail, showed absurdly. There came a hail from the landward, and then a storm of shouting, and the noise of horses galloping in scrub. Looking round, I saw a posse of planters galloping hard down to the shallows abreast of us.

"Ship ahoy!" came the hail. "Surrender, and come ashore."

"Heave," cried Little Theo to the men at the capstan. "Heave. Up aloft, you boy. Aloft. To the cross-trees with you."

A man at the capstan cried out: "Heave, boys. Oh, heave. Heave and start her. Heave and break your backs." The men cried out, rallying each other, the bow-wash began to cream, the warp grunted and crackled. I saw the oarsmen in the boat stand off from the shore, pulling hard, so as to put the ship between them and the posse. "Heave," cried Little Theo. "Heave, and she goes."

"Surrender. Do you hear? Surrender, or we fire," the planters shouted.

"What's the matter?" Dick shouted to them. "Why should we surrender?"

"Smuggling's the matter," they answered. "Cease heaving on that warp. Stop, or we fire."

"Up with you, boy," said Dick, advancing a step or two towards me. "Up Heave ahead, forward there."

"Come ashore, you in the boat," a voice cried.

"Fire," cried some one else. I glanced down, and there was Theo fingering his pistols. I had a feeling that I had only a second more to live. A quick fear startled me; I bounded swiftly up two ratlines; and then, just as a gun went off with a crack from somewhere behind me, I lost my footing on the ratlines,

clutched at something and missed, and tumbled backwards into the creek.

I seemed to be a long time falling. I hit the water a flattening slap, went down, rose, took a mouthful, and struck out. I heard no particular noise during my eclipse—no noise, that is, which I could rightly distinguish; but when I rose there was the shore in a swathe of powder-smoke. They had fired a volley. One or two men were racing up the creek to fire at the boat, which, as I could plainly hear, was pulling hard, amid cries and the dry grunting of the rowlocks. The men in the *Marie Galante* were singing now some old, sweet, noisy chorus of the sea, about being bound to Rio. A gun or two cracked among the smoke. I heard the bullets "pobbing" into the wood of the ship.

"Come back, you," Little Theo shouted to me. "Catch this rope." But the rope fell short. I couldn't get to it. There came a thundering volley over my head. Somebody flung a handful of earth at me, the water spattered up in little jets. I heard Dick's voice shout "Heave," a shout of "Stand clear," cries of "Fire again," "Shoot higher," "That's got them." Then quite clearly and plainly, in a lull, as I swam, I heard a quiet voice say, "Ride to Myngs' Creek. The frigate's there. She'll catch them as sure as eggs." "Fire," said some one else again. The smoke rolled all round me. Recollect that I was swimming hard, swimming like a man in a nightmare, through a sea which seemed to

be made of blankets. I was so excited that my strokes were probably short and wild, and I kept dropping my feet to see if I could touch ground. I suppose I had been in the water some seventy or eighty seconds when my foot found bottom. I strained forward, throwing up my hands. I was groping forward on hard ground, within a dozen yards of the shore; but all whelmed in the stinking powder smoke, full of hot smuts from the wads. A hand suddenly settled on the back of my neck. "Give us your arm," said Dick's voice, amid a swirl of water. "Back you come. Heave." He was clutching a loose line of something, the end of the main buntlines probably. Directly he cried out to heave, the hands aboard hauled in on it.

"You young cub," said Dick good-humouredly, blowing the water from his mouth, "I'll cut your liver out with a file. Heave in, you jokers. Heave." It was evident that the ship was now moving fast through the water. She was dragging us astern of her. Guns cracked and banged behind us. On deck, when I got there, it seemed just as it had been before, and that was strange, for I had passed through so much in those few minutes. There was one difference—Benito lay dead by the main hatchway, shot through the heart; a little silver crucifix lay beside him, cut from its beads by the shot which killed him. I cannot say that I was moved by the sight of that poor body. I had seen too much fighting since the day before to be startled by a

corpse, yet the crucifix lying there touched me to the quick.

"Cut the cable," shouted Dick. "I'll take her out under sail. Keep her as near as you can, Cap." Theo was at the helm. "Up now," said Dick to me. "Try to get away again, and I'll take you and hang you. If you've given my wound cold, I'll give you a dozen with a Gosport cat. Up aloft with you."

I went up to the cross-trees, shivering in my dripping wet clothes; and from the cross-trees I watched the water ahead, changing to yellowy paleness and sometimes breaking. The posse had galloped forward to the bluff among the cedars, hoping that we should be unable to pass through the creek mouth unhelped by our warp, which was now cut, both by them and by ourselves. We were forging slowly forward now, close-hauled, about two hundred yards from the shore, and standing further away from it, so as to make the opening out of range of their guns. A man in the top below me cried out from time to time to Dick to alter his course, so as to avoid a rock.

II.

You might think that it was as exciting as a play to sit up there in the bright sun watching it all, knowing that I was escaping from slavery. There was the mouth of the creek, three hundred yards across. There to

the right was the bluff, with the posse of armed men off their horses, crouched among the sumach-bushes, or behind boulders; while the horses shook their heads and jingled among the trees at their backs. But I saw that if the wind, which was coming light and gusty, should fail, we should go ashore on the rocks below the bluff. Then there would be a fight, and some would be shot, and others drowned, and I, if I escaped death, should go back to be a slave. If the wind held, then we might pass out to sea; but even so I should be a pirate and a smuggler. And the frigate (I remembered so clearly what they had said about the frigate) would sail down and catch us, and I should perhaps be hanged as a pirate at the yardarm. There was no excitement for me in the matter: only a dull, dead sick feeling, and a sort of fascination, such as they say those caught by a boa feel in the instant before the folds crush round, smashing out the life. We were moving very slowly, remember. We had only those light top-gallant sails set, and they were barely enough to make us crawl. There came a noise behind me, which made me look round. The hands below had found an old poop-awning, which they were setting on the main-yard. It made a most queer-looking sail, for it had the sheets knotted to its corners, and a gap in the centre where the guy should have been. But crude as the sail was it made a difference to us. It gave us at least half a knot more (as I could plainly see and feel) when they got the sheet aft

and the tack boarded. Then the wind drooped, the sail slatted once or twice and drooped too. We began to drift ashore very slowly and idly, broadside on, with our sails lifting lazily, and falling back again. My heart leaped at this. I thought that the pirates would surrender, because in a minute or two we should be on the rocks, piled up, perhaps lying on our side, so that the posse could pick us off one by one if surrender were not made.

The men ashore thought that this would happen. One or two of them galloped round the creek to take up positions on the other side. Some crept down under cover, so as to be nearer to us if we struck Up there on the cross-trees I could feel the ship slowly sagging away towards the rocks I could even pick out the pale patch of water which hid the rock on which she would strike. It was a big irregular rock, shaped roughly like a V with the apex towards us. It occurred to me when I saw this rock that we should strike with great force—not once, nor twice, but half a dozen times, with pounding jolts which would fling the masts out of her. I realized in a dim sort of way that up aloft there in the cross-trees I was like a stone in one of those ancient catapults, and that in a moment or two, when she took the rock, the catapult would be discharged and I should be shot into the sea as the mast tipped over. Well. I dared not leave my perch. Little Theo's pistol was a worse thing than the water. I was not going down to

face Little Theo. I remembered how my father had told me that a number of long breaths should always be taken before a plunge into the sea. I stood up on the cross-trees, holding on by the top-gallant halliards, and took three or four deep breaths. As I stood there inhaling, something flashed and cracked ashore, and something struck the mast below my hand, scattering tiny white splinters. It was not till the half second afterwards that I realized that I had been fired at. Another shot cut away the halliards above my hand, so that I swerved, staggered, and almost went down, while the great yard jolted all its weight on to the lifts. That was enough for me. I slid down from the cross-trees by the topmast back-stay into the top, where I lay down flat behind the thick tarpaulin which made a low breast work all round it. The seaman stationed in the top to warn the helmsman of rocks and shallows came over to me, jeering, asking what I was afraid of, telling me to get on up again; for if I were to be shot, he said, I shouldn't be hanged, and if I were to be hanged, why then I shouldn't be shot; so what was I making all the fuss for? Up with me, or he'd prod me one with his hanger. However, at that instant of time the ship grated over a patch of sand, with shock enough to fling him flat on to the planking beside me. A shot cut a hole in the tarpaulin, and drove a bit of yarn on to his nose with a smart fillip. "O Eliza," he said, going as white as cotton. "Oh. I'm killed. I'm killed"

"Well, how do you like it yourself?" I asked him. "Why don't you get up, and sing out where the rocks are?"

A smart little volley of shot came scattering with a buzzing and a rapping. When it had gone I felt strangely cheered and soothed. I looked through a hole in the top (the lubber's hole) to see how the whitish patch of rock lay. There was a fascination in that rock. I did not consider the risk of being killed as I stared down. I wanted to see the ship sidle herself on to the reef. I wanted to say to myself, "Not yet. Not yet. In a moment. *Now;*" and have my hands firmly on something at the instant of her striking. "She will heel over," I said to myself, "and pound down upon the reef again, grinding her side out with the pressure. Then she will fill, and turn her keel shoreward, flinging me into the sea." Again she took the sand and staggered, driving clear with her own weight and churning the water into soup. Then I saw things projecting suddenly from her side, lashing the water, swinging that shoreward side of her away from the posse. Little Theo had got out sweeps, or those long oars used for small ships in light air. He was going to row her out.

"What are they doing?" the man asked. He was still overcome with terror.

"Trying to sweep her off," I answered.

"Why don't they shoot them hayseeds? Shoot 'em. That's the style. That's my style. Them sweeps is

old rotten things. They'll go; and I'll be hanged. I'll be hanged."

"Well," I said (rather aptly, I thought). "If you're hanged you won't be drowned. Look out. Hold tight." Another volley came from the shore. Our rowing stopped. One oar, crippled by a slug, bent and swung aft uselessly. The other two made a tentative stroke and paused. The 'tween-deck ports on that side went up together with a dry rattling of port-ropes. After an instant's pause for aiming, a volley of small arms flashed from them, making the ship tremble, as I could feel even up in the top. After the volley the ports fell back again. The oars tugged and wavered again, straining hard. They began to take hold. We began to move. The posse seeing that, fired hard at the oars, at the oar ports, and at the top where we were. I suppose a dozen bullets came through the tarpaulin breastwork over me. As long as I lay still I could not be hit; but it dawned on me after a time that we were moving, and that the channel needed careful steering. The ship was being steered from within the cabin by means of the relieving tackles. Little Theo, lying huddled up against the bulwarks far aft, was calling to the steerers to port or starboard by what he could see of the shore from where he lay. He took little peeps from time to time through one of the empty upper deck gun-ports; but that was of little use. What he wanted was a hand to warn us of the shoaling of the sea in our

path. Stretching out my leg, I kicked the frightened man. "Get up," I said, "and con the ship out." He whimpered and baulked, crying out that he wasn't fit to die. "Very well," I said, "I'll do it. But first you give me your knife and belt. If I'm to do your work I'll be paid for it." He did this very gladly. I think he would have given me all he had I put them on and stood up

I had no sooner stood up than a couple of balls came past my ears with a whang. At the same time a fresh gust caught us and drove us forward, almost flinging me down lubber's hole. We gathered way fast, for the wind held. "Port," I shouted. "Port hard" We swung past a bad rock just in time, and thumped with a shaking crash on to a spur lying out from it. She rose up from it and pounded down before she drove by, with the pressure of the way she had upon her. Up aloft where I was I could not tell how badly she had struck. I had nothing to tell me except the clatter aloft of gear flogging and buckling spars. I did not doubt from the motion of the ship that she had hit herself severely, somewhere abaft her beam. I heard them crying out down below to get the pumps rigged. The sweeps on that side trailed aft uselessly. The rowers had flung them down to attend to the pumps. Those ashore gave a cheer when they saw us strike. They ceased firing, expecting us to fill and go down in short order; but instead of that we kept our course, drawing

away from them, till even their heaviest gun fell short of us. Now the ship began to bob to the advancing ranks of cresters setting into the creek. The danger was over. We were drawn abreast of the bluff with the cedar trees upon it, standing out to open water, with a bright sparkle of foam at our bows. Little Theo was walking the deck once more. A hand was at the helm on deck. Dick, far aft, was dipping Spanish colours to the posse in contemptuous farewell. A spurt of water shot from one of the 'tween-deck ports. They were trying the well with a little hand-pump. Something in the gaiety of that leaping fountain made me homesick and sad. I knew then that I was outward bound again, to a new kind of life of which I could not see the end. There was Virginia, where I had eaten my heart for two years. Before me was water, running on into the sky, a greyish blue waste of Atlantic. I did not know what I was to find there. A violent, rough, dishonest way of life, I thought , a life without beauty, without leisure, without friends. I had wasted two years of my life in that land of hill and forest astern. In a little while I should be too old for any profession. I should be a wasted life, untaught and boorish. I should be but a daily labourer, while boys below me at Dr. Carter's would be filling honoured posts, advancing the world's thought and their country's dignity. In this melancholy mood, even the thought that I should be with Mr. Mora gave me no comfort. He had not been

able to save himself. A hail came up to me from the deck.

"Hands," cried Little Theo. "Hands, man the pump. Starboard watch, trim sail. Down from aloft there, you" I slid down the topmast backstay to the deck, and there was Dick, cutting a pump-washer from a boot.

"Dick," I cried, "what are they manning the pumps for? Is she badly hurt?" Dick turned to me, all wet and filthy from prowling down below to get at the leak.

"Yes," he said; "she's ripped her garboard strakes off of her quick-work. So if you don't get a hold of that pump, or ladle her out with one of them buckets, you'll know what sea-floor smells like, before you're put in a watch. Pump, you young rip. Pump. Look at it coming out there. It's as bright as breakers. She's rammed a hole in her silly old bilge as big as Uncle James's waggon. Heave round on that brake, my son. Off saddle and muscle up. Make the pretty salt water go back where it belongs." He bent down and fitted the washer carefully. "There," he cried "Try her with that, my sons. Heave round now. Heave. Does that fetch her?" They took a few fetching strokes with the brakes till the water was running down into the waterways in a smart stream. "That's got her," said Dick. "Start a song with it." He gave a heave or two at one of the brakes, and then piped up a plaintive old song, with a tune which thrilled me. The men

joined in as they pumped, singing with real feeling, keeping good time and tune :—

"I dreamed a dream the other night.
Lowlands, Lowlands. Hurrah, my John.
I dreamed a dream the other night.
My Lowlands a-ray"

Singing this old sad song, I passed past Old Joe's Headland, and away from Accomac forever.

III.

There was a great deal of confusion in the *Marie Galante* that afternoon. Half a dozen hands had been wounded by the posse, two very seriously, including the drunken doctor. With these out of action, as well as those hurt in the fight with the Indians, we were desperately short-handed. It ought not to have been so; for she was a small and handy ship, under hardly any sail; but the leak was a serious matter, keeping six hands always at the pumps in twenty-minute spells. With a hand steering, a hand looking out aloft, a hand taking charge and keeping the rest to their work, we were as short-handed as the Ark, as Dick said. The hands made a sort of a meal on deck, with a good allowance of spirits. I noticed that Dick kept a careful eye on them as they ate. He

checked the least appearance of rudeness and discontent, with what seemed to me to be unnecessary bitterness. He seemed uneasy during the meal. He kept glancing at the water from the pumps. "Why," he said, in a surprised tone, "ain't them pumps sucking yet? Sing out when they suck" Then he turned to the next spell, who were standing by to take their turn. "I'll give a ten-dollar mess-treat to the spell which sucks her." (*Note.*—By sucking he meant making the pumps to "suck," or draw up air, showing that they had emptied the well) "What are you staring at?" he said to me. "You want some work to do. You've eaten as much as you're worth. So. You see that fore-hatch. Go down it into the 'tween-decks, and from there into the fore-hold. At the foot of the ladder you'll see a cask lashed abaft the stanchions of the hatch. In the cask is some soft-brick and some old sail-rag. You get some of that, and clean the brass on the cabin-windows. Down with you, now." I left my food, and ran away to do what I was bid.

Down in the fore-hold below the water-line it was very dark I groped all about the fore-hatch for the cask which Dick had mentioned, but I could not meet with it anywhere. I was just going to go on deck again, to tell Dick that I could not find the cask, when I saw a light, like a lantern light, moving about above the bales and casks of the stowed cargo, in the narrow space between their tops and the 'tween-deck beams and

planks. I did not know what it was at first. It frightened me. Enough wickedness and violence had gone on in that ship for it to be haunted by evil things, such as they say walk in old castles at night. It is all nonsense, of course; no one ever sees such things; one fears darkness because one cannot see what is in it. But you go down into a dark hold, full of gurglings and groanings, after a day and night of wildest nervous strain, and see a globe of light coming slowly towards you out of the darkness, and you will remember all the ghost stories you ever read, and believe them, and quake all down your marrow at them. After ten seconds of horror I saw that a man was scrambling over the bales towards me with a lantern in his hand. "Don't cut," said Dick's voice. "Hold on; I want you." He slid himself down some packs of vicuna wool, and brought to alongside me. "Here," he said. "Come on here, and don't make a noise." He pulled me over to the ship's port-side. "See this," he said, showing a small earthenware pot. "Watch me." He placed it against one of the great ribs of the ship and laid his ear to it. "Quiet," he said. "Don't stir. Quiet a minute." He listened intently for a while, and then moved to the rib further forward, where he listened again. Then he went right up to the bows of her and listened again at the foremost rib of all, in a space so dark that I could only grope my way with one hand on the ship's side. The lantern, being of thick horn, gave little more light than

a rushlight. He sighed a little at the foremast rib, and bade me come aft again to one of the after ribs. "Be careful of the ring-bolts," he said "We had the slaves down here three trips back, and some of the irons are still about. There. Now, quiet again."

We listened together intently in that central darkness. It was unreal there. It was strange. It was wonderful. I felt that we were two conspirators down below, plotting something; or if you like, two doctors testing the ship's heart-beats, two little thoughts in a brain, two dim figures from a dream.

"Now," said Dick. "Come here, boy. Put your ear to the pot here and listen carefully." I stepped up to him, and laid my ear to the pot; and instantly, as though I had laid a shell to my ear, a noise of water came to me—not as it comes with a shell, though; nor as it comes from a tap. It was a peculiar noise. There was a gurgling and a bubbling sound, as though a brook were running at a little distance. All sorts of noises were mixed up with it, of course. There was the piping, groaning noise of a ship's side straining at every roll, and the noise of rats scuffling and squeaking; but very plainly, through all the noises, there came the noise of water gurgling and bubbling. At first I thought that it might be the water creaming away from the bows as we drove along; but I soon found that that noise was distinct. "Well," said Dick at last, "what do you make of it? What do you hear?"

"Water," I answered, "water gurgling."

"Yes," he said. "Water gurgling. About how much water? A good big brook of water?"

"Yes," I said. "A pretty good swift brook of water."

"Yes," he answered. "A pretty good swift brook Well, it's coming into us, that brook. There's two feet of it in the well. I tell you, boy, it will be a close call for us this trip. She's knocked a big hole in herself." I was aghast at this. I didn't know what to answer. At last I asked him what they would do, and whether they could get to the island.

"No," he said. "No, no With a hole like that in her, and a crew of hangbacks like them on the deck there, that's out of the question. We shan't smell Boca Drago this trip."

"No?" said I. "And you can't put in to James Town nor into the creek here, for the country's raised on you. And by this time the frigate will be after you, and you won't be able to get away from her. You've got no sails."

"Yes," he said, in a gloomy voice. "We may look to be chased in less than an hour. I wonder what we could do. One thing is sure, we are in a bad way all round. But, listen, you. Do you hear the pump going?"

"No," I answered, after a pause. "They've stopped pumping."

"Well," said he, "I'll dye my hair. Do they want

her to sink?" He ran up on deck, muttering angry words; I followed him.

IV.

When we got to the deck we found the hands quarrelling round the pump, some part of which had broken internally, choking it. Some were maintaining that the thing could be mended; the others, by far the larger body, were saying that they would break the head of any one who mended it; for why, said they, should they want to mend a pump which would keep them hard at work all day, short-handed as they were? Dick was never a patient man. He flung them aside angrily, so that he might examine the damage. "See here," he said, after a short examination. "One of you fools has been monkeying with this. Which of you was it?"

Nobody answered; but the tone of Dick's voice troubled them a good deal; they hung their heads, and looked as schoolboys look between the lecture and the flogging. "Where is Theo?" said Dick, sucking in his lower lip and biting on it.

"Gone asleep," said one of them. "His wound's broke out again, so José gave him a sleeping draught, and he's just off, quiet as a lamb. He'll sleep till night, I guess."

"Well then," said Dick, rounding on them fiercely.

"I command here, I guess. And I'll tell you something. Virginia, there, is death to you. See? You fired on the posse, even if you didn't kill anybody. And, even without them counts, our cargo here is enough to hang the lot of us. That ticks off Virginia. In one of them creeks, getting ready to come after us, is the station frigate, which we thought was at James Town. She'll be after us at any minute. So much for her. We're at sea without sails and without stores. We're short-handed, and a lot of our hands are hurt. And a pretty rotten lot the sound ones are. Lastly, we've got two foot of water in the well, and one of you beauties has gone and wrecked the pump. That ticks off us. Now then, you may chew on that for a while; I'm going to have a smoke."

He lit a seaman's short pipe, and walked up and down to windward of them, giving them contemptuous glances from time to time. I never saw a sorrier lot of men than those crestfallen pirates. At first they stood dumbfoundedly looking at each other. Then one of them went to the place abaft the main-mast where the sounding-rod hung, to measure the leak for himself. The rod was no longer there; Dick had dropped it overboard privily They had to accept his word for the leak's presence; and since they could not disprove it, they did so. One or two of them bent down in a faint-hearted way as though to repair the pump. The others stared stupidly at Dick, and then looked at each other,

each hoping that somebody else would pipe up an answer or suggest a remedy. At last one of them, more frightened than the others, asked "what would become of them, please," which was just the question which Dick wanted.

"Why," he said, "if you are not hanged you'll be drowned, which is what I hope from my heart you will be." This crushed any little show of mutiny which might have been left in them. It made them realize that they were in a pretty tight place. One of them said that the best thing would be to run the ship ashore, or take her humbly into James Town and submit to the King's mercy.

"Yes," said Dick. "The posse are following along the shore, hoping that that is what you'll do. As for the King's mercy, you've just defied it. Find another answer. Guess again, my Toro." Toro did not guess again, nor did anybody else guess again. "Well," said Dick, 'you are all fallen dumb, are you? You were talkative enough just now. Now perhaps you'll listen to me, before she sinks on you, as she will if you leave her to herself much longer. Up there, some of you, and rip that awning off her. It's a bare chance. Two of you bring up blankets from below—twenty or thirty, and any mattresses you may run against. Stop, no. A bale or two of that vicuna wool, down in the fore-hold. That's a thicker kind ot stuff. Be lively with it. Don't stand looking on, the rest of you. Fetch out the hand-pump

and get her started. The rest of you get a chain of buckets ready, in case it comes to that. I'll keep this ship alive as long as there's any sense in it. Stamp now. Jump."

In a few minutes the awning came down from the main-yard. Dick stretched it out on the deck, and sent some hands to get two tackles passed round the ship from without (under her keel), one on each side of the site of the supposed leak. While they were doing this, he put other hands to the work of sewing thick handfuls of wool, or rolls of blanket, on the inside of the awning, so as to make it resemble a furry mat. I helped at this work by tearing out the wool from the bale and handing it to those who had sail-needles. We worked at a feverish rate. As we worked, a man came up from the 'tween-decks to say that the little hand-pump, which would at least have held the leak in an even balance, was out of order in some way. A hole had been knocked in the shaft, letting in the air. There was no working it. It wouldn't draw water. Dick didn't say much to this.

"Some more of you beauties' handiwork," he muttered. "Well. If I get you out of this mess," he added, "perhaps you'll be wiser another time." They certainly looked as though they had made up their minds to be a great deal wiser another time. For my part I doubted whether that other time would ever come. When I thought of that gurgling water down in the hold, I

began to think of what would happen if this contrivance of Dick's came to nothing. What would happen? The water would come creeping, in little runnels, over the 'tween-decks, sliding across with a nasty rush at each roll. And each roll would be smaller than the one before. And each pitch would be deader, and "more soggy" (as they said) than the one before Till at last she would be a log on the sea, settling, settling, settling, the swing-ports awash, the hatchway a brimming well, the bitts an island. Then we should waver to one side, and lurch, and go down, like a dropping stone; and I should smell the sea-floor, as Dick called it, and be rolled about by the ground swell, with the little white sea-snails and the coral-plants and the shadows of big ships passing.

"Now," said Dick, when we had finished the work. "The sooner we get this joker over the side the better. There's three foot inside the lower hold by this time. So heave now, hearties. Over with her." We adjusted the tackle to the corners of the awning, and then hauled it under the ship's keel, till we had got it, as we judged, over the hole. Dick took me down below from time to time to try the leak by the method of the pot. After the fourth readjustment of the tackle I found that the noise of the running brook had ceased, but that in its place there was a dull swashing noise, just below our feet as it seemed. The rats were in great numbers, running about excitedly, without any fear of us.

"See those rats?" said Dick. "They're flooded out from the lower hold. We've got as much sea down below us as would float a Campeachy sloop. Hark at it swishing around. Ugly noise. It gives you a grue, I think. But we've checked the leak for the time, that's certain. That gives us time to look around us, anyhow. We'll get the pumps rigged."

But getting even the hand-pump rigged was no easy job to men left practically without tools. Dick was a marvel of adaptive skill and patience, the craftsman's two qualities, but even he found it hard to get anything done.

"Well," he said at last, when the pump sent its first wavering jet of water over the side, "she works at last. I pity Doggy Sam if I ever come across him in the future. He's given me the time of my life getting this pump rigged. Heave gently, boys. She may burst on you at any minute. Now we'll tackle the big one." All this time we were dragging slowly along on a course about S.E., holding slantingly away from the land, now distant from us about four miles. We were crawling, because we had no fit sails to set. What we should do in foul weather, or if the wind, freshening and drawing ahead, should force us back, I could not imagine. I supposed that we must be driven inevitably into James Town.

"Aloft there," shouted Dick. "Any sign of the frigate? Come down for a glass and see if you can make her out inshore there."

A careful examination of the coast-line through a spy-glass showed the mouth of Myngs' Creek, but no sign of the frigate.

"Good," said Dick. "There'll be no moon to-night. We shall get away after all, boy. Does any one here know about Myngs' Creek?"

V.

Now it happened that, rather than a year before, I had gone to Myngs' Creek in old Carteret's sloop, with Carteret and a couple of negroes. We had taken about a ton of tobacco, for the Planters' Association, and had brought back a cargo of assorted iron-ware. I had been hard at work throughout my stay in the creek, and I remembered little about the entrance from the sea. I said that it was a very good place for ships to careen in—[*Note*.—To careen a ship is to heave her over on her side, so as to scrub all the barnacles from her]—because the end of the creek was sandy, and free from rocks. More than that, there was plenty of good brush-wood thereabouts in case any captain chose to burn away the barnacles by the process called "breaming." It was not a well-known place. Myngs, the planter, was dead now, and his plantation overgrown; but I remembered hearing that the frigates on the station sometimes careened

there, or put in for wood and water, instead of going the extra two or three days' sail to James Town. I mentioned this to Dick.

"Yes," he said casually. "I shouldn't wonder." He stopped and looked carefully shoreward. "There," he cried, "there. Yes. There she comes. She's coming out after us. Give me the glass." Before I realized what it was that had moved him, he was racing up aloft to the cross-trees to examine her. Looking towards the land I saw that, sure enough, she was coming out, a small frigate of the sixth-rate, under a fore-topsail, spritsail and mainsail, hardly more canvas than we ourselves carried. There was something wrong with her after-masts; but what it was I couldn't quite make out, they were cloaked by her topsail It was just upon sunset when we first caught sight of her, a fine-weather sunset, with a good deal of haze. The wind came fair and light, growing if anything weaker, with the promise of falling calm. It would be dark probably in an hour's time, perhaps more quickly if the haze gathered. Our one chance was to keep out of her clutches till dark, when we might possibly elude her. It was a slender chance, I admit I could see by the looks of the men on deck that they gave themselves up for lost, directly they caught sight of her.

"We're done," said one of them. "She'll fetch us up in a round turn, and then we shall dangle. We may as well go drink."

"On deck there," cried Dick from aloft. "Heave round on that pump, or I'll come and make you. Come up aloft, you, boy Come up here to me."

When I got to the cross-trees, Dick bade me sit down steadily, and take a good view of the frigate through the glass. "Tell me," he said. "You've got a good view of her?"

"Yes," I said; "and what a wonderful thing this glass is. It makes her seem almost within hail. She's as clear as clear. I've never looked through a glass before."

"No?" said Dick "Well. That one is a very good glass. I got that glass at the Isle of Aves. It was in a brass case, buried a foot in the sand. I was digging for water there, above the tide-marks, and I came across that That glass belonged to the great French Admiral the County Stree (Comte d'Estrées), so it has a right to be a good one. But look now very carefully, and tell me what you make of her after-masts"

"Why," said I, after a brief examination, "her main topmast has been left ashore, and her mizzen topmast is unrigged."

"Yes," said Dick. "That's the case. I thought so, but I didn't dare hope it Now look carefully ashore, at the back of Myngs' Creek there. What do you see?"

"Smoke," I said; "smoke going up in a column. Two or three columns. What can be smoking there?"

Dick did not answer, but called to the men below to rig up tackles aloft, so as to hoist buckets of water on to the sails. Then he called to the helmsman to put dead before the wind, which was the *Marie Galante's* best point of sailing. In a few minutes, while we watched the frigate, the hands began to send up buckets of water, which they tipped over the sails so as to make the canvas swell. When a sail is swollen with water it retains the wind. An old sail, which is dry and worn thin, lets a lot of the wind through it. Presently, in the failing wind, the night began to come upon us. As it grew darker, Dick took careful bearings of the land, and gave orders for a light to be placed in the cabin. The men grumbled at this; but Dick told them that he knew what he was about, and that he wanted it done; so they obeyed, growling that Dick wanted to get them all hanged, showing where they were. When this had been done, Dick got up a lot of boards, lashed them together so as to form a raft, and rigged upon it a cask, with square holes cut in it at intervals, and a little mast and sail for its forward end. At the bottom of the cask he placed a big tin full of oil, with a wick stuck into each end. At nine o'clock, when it was pitch dark and almost calm, he lowered this contrivance into the sea, climbed down upon it, and listened intently for some minutes Then he climbed back, put out the light in the cabin, lit the wicks in the raft, and turned her adrift into the sea.

"Charles," he said, drawing me aside, "d'you know what kind of a fix we're in?"

"Yes," I said, "I think I do. The fothering mat over the leak may slip (in which case we shall sink in a few hours), or if that doesn't happen first, the frigate will take you, and you will all be hanged, either for killing the men in resisting the Sheriff, or for piracy. And I shall be taken back to old Carteret."

"Yes," said Dick, "and have the life pretty well welted out of you for losing the horse, and failing to bring the salve. But we aren't sunk or taken yet. And what do you think of the frigate?"

"Why," I answered, "she's a little frigate. And in this wind she's going no faster than we are."

"No," he said, "that's not what I meant. Listen You see that she is partly unrigged? That shows that she put into Myngs' Creek to careen. Why else would she be unrigged at anchor in fair weather? News of us reached her when she was half-stripped, ready to careen; that is why she was so long in coming out after us. The smokes which you saw show that she is getting tar heated; or so I suppose Possibly she was going to caulk her lee side, before putting it over on to the mud. Her captain is a child at his business. Otherwise, he would have got news of us from the planters a week ago. I don't know, though. He may have just come on to this station from the southward. One other thing. The frigate has come out in such a hurry that she has

brought no boats. How do I know that? If she had boats she would have taken us by this time by means of them. I listened carefully, a minute or two ago, but I could hear no noise of oars. So now I am going to play a new card. Bring the ship to the wind," he said to the helmsman. "Bring her to the wind, and rouse out, a few of you, and load your pistols."

"What are you going to do now?" they grumbled. "You've been working our old irons up till we're sick of it. What's your new game?"

"You'll soon see," he said. "Get ready the boat. I'm going into that creek to steal the frigate's stores. When you're in a desperate mess, be desperate. That's what Julius Cæsar done, and look what a big gun he was. And you, boy, you shove your head into a bucket of water and get your brains clear. I want you to remember what Myngs' Creek is like inside Now then, you gang of ten-and-a-talliers, buck your sand. Come on and get hearty, or I'll club you with a Portsmouth fiddle. That's what makes the sailors dance. Get ready the boat, you crockamores. Stamp and go, now."

But here one of those maddening seamen made an objection.

"Here," he said "You say you're going into the creek to take the frigate's stores, and that? What kind of madness do you call that?"

"Madness," said Dick. "A kind of madness which will lift you out of a pretty queer lash-up." He took

we're allowed. Then rush the buildings. Get the stores, if there are any; and then pull out in the frigate's boats, with any spoil there may be."

"There may not be any," said one of the men. "And then what are we to do?"

"When we come to the water, we'll build a bridge," said Dick. "At present you will kindly hold your jaw. I'll do all the doing that's needed, never you fear."

After this little brush, he saw that all the rowlocks and crutches were muffled, so that our passage might be noiseless. "Shove off," he said; "and you ship-keepers, wounded as you are, burn a blue light for us if you see three pistol-flashes from the sea. Otherwise we may not find you. Pull easy, sons. We've a long pull before us. There's no sense in getting tired. Don't talk. Of all the queer things in this world, sound over water is the queerest. You never can tell how far it will travel in a calm."

VI.

The men stopped talking. They settled down to pull, in a long, wearily-slow, merchant-service stroke, pausing on the recover and the half-stroke, but putting on all their weight, from heels to neck. The darkness covered away the ship from us till she was a blur, hiding a few stars, a darkness against which the phosphorus gleamed,

as the ripples gurgled against her. It was deathly still, pulling there alone on the sea. The panting of the men, the swirl of the oars, the whisking, flickering dripping of the drops from the oar-blades, seemed only like the night breathing, a great breath from the darkness. When we had pulled, as it seemed for hours, we heard very far away a ship's bell faintly making eight, and a deep-toned fo'c'sle bell replying, faintly, but more loudly.

"Midnight," said Dick, in a whisper. "That comes from the frigate."

By this time we were near the shore, quite near enough for safety. The surf was pretty bad, as it so often is in calm weather. We were in a ground-swell, which rolled up big and oily, to lump itself down on the reef, spreading out like fire as it smashed. Roller after roller broke, throwing up high sprays.

"This is all very well," said Dick. "But there's no landing through that. We must chance the opening. It's safer so."

The men began to growl that it was what they had always said, there was no landing. Now they were going to be taken under the guns of everybody in the creek, they said, and have their heads blown off them by a lot of royal pugs

"Lie down on the raft," said Dick, "and keep still till you're called. Give way in the boat. Take your muffles from your rowlocks. I'm commanding here."

Ten minutes' more pulling brought us off the creek's entrance, towards which we steered at a good pace. We could see nothing but the black mass of land broken by the harbour mouth, with white water foaming at its base. Then Hunko, who stood in the bows looking out, said that he smelt some white men, smoking cured tobacco. Almost at the same instant there came a hail, in a rather high-pitched cultivated voice.

"Boat ahoy. Oars, there in the boat. What are you? Lay on your oars, or I'll fire into you."

"Sir," shouted Dick, without a second's hesitation (he must have made up his tale beforehand), "we're from Hog's Creek with a raft of wrought wood. We be come to put up a shed for Mr. Carey of the Grains."

We heard the lieutenant, or so we supposed him to be, ask a man near by him something about this man Mr. Carey. Dick had heard the name mentioned two days before as that of a wealthy planter, who might care to buy a few slaves whenever the *Marie Galante* had any such "goods" to sell. It was not a very happy choice for us, as it happened. Mr. Carey was not so far off as we had supposed.

"Oars a minute," the lieutenant cried again. "Fetch Mr. Carey, one of you. Lie by, you in the boat, till I tell you. Bring your raft alongside these rocks here." We heard a man moving off up the creek at a smart pace, stumbling through the scrub like a trotting cow. We could make out about a dozen men in the gloom

there. There might have been more for all that we could tell.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Dick submissively: "would you allow us to pull a little further in? The suck here is setting us on to the rocks: and the raft is only lightly made, sir. If your honour would allow us, sir."

"All very well," said the lieutenant to himself (we could hear him quite plainly in the stillness); "but you come very late to Mr. Carey of the Grains." He raised his voice and hailed Dick again. "What brings you here at this time? Why do you bring the wood at this time of night? It's after midnight."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Dick, "we hoped to be here by nine; but there was no wind, and we've been rowing all the time. And what's four oars, sir, against a soaking drift like the current here?"

The lieutenant made no answer to this. He said something in a low voice to somebody close to him. One of our seamen dug his oars into the sea, and pulled a couple of strokes.

"Keep her off, Dick," he said gently. "We'll be on the rocks in a minute"

"Oars," said Dick angrily. "Wait till his honour gives us leave." He paused, and then called out to the lieutenant.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "might we just pull up alongside the jetty further in? We could be

with winning humbleness. "Are there no boats lying there?"

"There's the cutter, sir," said the corporal to the lieutenant.

"Haul the cutter further up then. Haul her up alongside the longboat there," the lieutenant snapped. "Put down your firelock, corporal. And you, Jones, give him a hand. Haul her to the jetty-end."

"Come, come," cried Dick, in pretended anger, to the men in the raft, as the corporal and his man began to haul the boat forward to make room for us. "Chuck us that line here, and let's get alongside. We're keeping the gentleman waiting Throw it here now. What are you waiting for? Has the ring-bolt drawn out?" This he said to prompt the raft's crew to give him the answer he wanted.

"Yes," said a sorry voice on the raft, "the ring's gone."

"Please, your honour," cried Dick again. "Could your men help the raft alongside? Her tow-ring's broke, and we can do nothing."

"I've got no men," said the lieutenant, fuming. "Get her ashore as you best can."

"Paddle her in, boys," said Dick, in a low voice to the raft's crew. "Land below us, where you can."

At this moment we heard an angry bull-bellow of a voice from somewhere ashore, rapidly coming nearer.

"Lieutenant," it roared "What do you mean by

this? How dare you call me out of bed with a cock-and-bull story of this kind? What's this nonsense? Are you drunk, sir, or are you merely incapable? Where's this boat from Hog's Creek? I've no wood coming from Hog's Creek. And you have the audacity to call me out of bed, at the bidding of any drunken lout who cares to impose on your credulity. I'll report you to the Governor, sir."

"Ashore, boys," said Dick. "We're blown upon. Here's old Carey. We've stopped too long" We bumped the boat in to the jetty and clambered up the piles on to the pier. The raft came ashore in shallower water somewhere astern of us.

"Corporal," cried the lieutenant in a startled yell. "Secure those men. Stand back there, you. Back into your boat, or I'll run you through."

The man with the torch made a rush for his gun, but I saw a dark shape topple him over, amid a shower of sparks. I saw the lieutenant's sword flash. He was quick enough, now that it was too late to do anything. Dick, who had just reached the pier top, ran at him, and snapped off the blade of his sword with a knock from a stretcher. The lieutenant struck at Dick with the hilt, a short arm blow which had no force behind it. Dick took it on his shoulder, stooped, caught the man round the knees and flung him. Somebody pitched the muskets into the sea. I distinctly heard the splashes, just as another somebody, charging in the dark, sent me

sprawling from behind. The men who were hauling the cutter forward dropped their rope with a few startled exclamations. I heard, "Eh. Eh." "What in the world?" from Carey; a "Stand clear," and "No, you don't," from some coarser voice, I think the corporal's. A second later I was on my feet again, and there was Dick trussing up a kicking lieutenant, in a deep silence, as though the night were intently listening. It had been done with a rush. Dick had taken them at the very instant. It had all ended as quietly as a church service. There was no more noise than a sort of dull helpless drumming on the ground, like that huddled drumming that a dying rabbit makes with its body.

"We've done better than I thought," said Dick. "Now, corporal, I'm going to take out your gag. If you let out a squeal I shall cut your throat. Here's my knife. Feel its point. Well. Be warned. I'm not joking. Now then."

He bade one of the men (I think it was Silvestre, the mulatto) take out the gag, which the man did at once. The corporal made no noise when he was released, except a sort of spitting noise as he got rid of the tarry dust of the old sail which had choked him

"Well," said Dick, "I'm pleased you've got sense enough to hold your peace. What's this lieutenant's name? Oh, you won't tell, won't you? Feel the point then. One. Two. Thr—. (You must note that Dick made no attempt to torture the corporal. He only pre-

tended to do so, to the end that, afterwards, the lieutenant might not blame the man for betraying secrets, if any were to be betrayed)

"I won't tell you," said the corporal sourly.

"Try Carey then," said Dick easily, to the man who sat on that foaming gentleman's chest. "Dig a knife into Mr. Carey. What's the lieutenant's name, Mr. Carey? Don't bellow, sir. We don't want to hurt you. What's the lieutenant's name?"

"Atkins," said Carey. "And I'll see you hanged, you ruffian. You shall dangle for this, if there's any law in the land." He was one of the richest planters on that side of Virginia It was said at the time that he owned as much land as the whole of Wales. I had heard vaguely, from farm hands and the like, that he lived in great state. He had built himself a house with a gilded dome (I believe), which was the talk of all America in those days. Afterwards, when I was with the logwood cutters at One Bush Key, I heard that he was known as old King Golden-Cap, on account of this house. He was a choleric old man, with a great sense of his own importance. To be lying on his back, chewing a clue of an old sail, while a pirate pricked his Adam's apple with a dagger, was something new to him. He resented it. "Wait," he said, gurgling "Wait. You filthy ruffians. Only wait."

"We'll wait," said Dick. "And how many men are down by the sea there?"

"Enough to swing you all at a rope's end before dawn," said Mr. Carey.

"Jim," said Dick. "Lieutenant Atkins's compliments, and the hands are to extend in open order along the coast, to the southward, to watch for an intended landing of smuggled goods. Say that the boat's crew just taken are smugglers. That's ourselves, remember. You are a farm-hand, sent with a message. Lively now. Get the pugs (as the King's seamen were always called then) out of the way, pronto. Run."

A hand started off smartly down to the sea to send the other watchers (if any were still about the creek's mouth) away from that part, so that we might creep out without challenge. I remember thinking how ready and bold the messenger would have to prove himself, and how wild a thing it was for Dick to send a message of the kind. "Suppose," I thought, "there is a lieutenant superior to this Atkins. Or suppose that the order just given countermands an order left by the captain. Or suppose, what is very probable, that Atkins is a false name, given by Carey to deceive us." No one paid much attention to me at the moment. I dare say I could have got away then had I tried. I had no thought of bolting, curiously enough. I had too lively a fear of being hanged without trial, if taken or forced into the living death of the man-of-war, among pressed men and branded criminals. You may think that I was very young and foolish to fear that. Was I? I was

an innocent boy, torn from his home by kidnappers, sold into slavery, and now torn from his slavery by pirates. I was entitled to every charity and consideration. But how much charity and consideration was I likely to get, out there in the wilds, from angry naval officers like this man on the ground, or from furious, mad planters like Mr. Carey? If I had been taken and had had to tell my story, how many would have believed it, do you suppose? The very unlikeliness of the tale was against its being believed.

VII.

Well. There was not much time for these reflections. Even while I thought them, Dick forced open the door of the great store shed, where Myngs had once stored his tobacco. There were some ship's lanterns hanging outside the door of the shed. These were lighted from the bonfire so that we could look about us. There were sails in plenty, lying on the shed-floor like monster snakes bulged with food. The frigate had landed all her foul-weather suit, and the greater part of the thinner, tropic suit, now half worn through. I suppose that the sails there would have come to some hundreds of pounds in taxpayers' money. They were well worth that to us. I think that within twenty seconds of the

door being opened, a great heavy course (or lower sail for the mast of a square-rigged vessel) was being lighted out on to men's shoulders and borne staggeringly to the edge of the jetty, where the frigate's long-boat lay beside the cutter The sail was tailed carefully into the boat by the light of a couple of blazing shrubs, one of which was given to me to hold. I remember peering over the dark jetty-edge to see the sail coiling down length by length, nine or ten feet at a time, while the dead leaves crinkled with fire fell upon it from the shrubs, lighting the cringles in the roping It was falling so exactly like a snake that a very little would have made me scream out, just like a girl. A topsail followed the course, and other sails followed the topsail. The men dragged out sail after sail, and passed them down into the boats. Bush after bush burned away in my hands to fiery stumps ; and, although the time seemed long, it was not really long, for the men worked very hard and did much in a few minutes. The sails of the boat were hoisted. They wavered and unfolded, gleaming out whitish and darkening as they moved above the heaps of canvas stowed along the thwarts. The boats were full of sail now. Coils of rope were being passed down, with bundles of neatly stopped and ticketed running rigging, which had been laid away in a corner of the shed. The men were just tossing down some of these, making more noise in their excitement than was wise, when the messenger came running back to Dick to tell him that the pugs were coming.

"Did you give my message?" said Dick.

"No," he said, very candidly, "I didn't. I didn't go near them. I was afraid."

"Put out," said Dick to us torch-bearers. "And dash some water on the fires. Into the boats and shove off. We've bungled it, I shouldn't wonder. What were you afraid of? You're a nice one to come out in the dark with. What's this? Oh, the lieutenant Quick. Bundle him to one side."

The lieutenant was thrust aside without ceremony. The men were scared in good earnest. People were marching slowly up towards us, coming by the path by which the corporal had come. In the stillness of the night we could hear their voices plainly. They were walking as men walk in the night watches at sea. We dropped down into the boats. The last thing Dick did before he shoved off was to pull out the plug of the boat in which we had come. She must have filled and sunk in a minute or less.

"Shove off," said Dick, "and oh, paddle light, and send us a good fair wind to blow us clear of this."

The oars dipped and drove us forward. "Muffle your rowlocks," said Dick, "and pull across to the other side of the creek."

VIII.

As we paddled across with our spoils we regretted that we had left no light behind us to show us how many sailors were coming. One or two might have been secured without trouble; but we knew that they were more than that. Perhaps four, perhaps forty. How can one tell in the dark? And frightened men can never judge anything. Dick muttered to himself that it all depended on whether they stumbled on the lieutenant or not. We got across to the other side of the creek, and turned towards the sea. We were all in the cutter, towing the long-boat. Rowing as they were, with their faces turned aft, the men watched the site of the jetty, where somebody, as we could hear, was striking a flint with a steel. The fires had been dashed with water. Even pirates, you see, showed a little sense at times.

Presently we saw a light placed in a lantern. The men there moved about in a dim uncertainty of candle-light. We could hear their voices talking about the extinction of the fires. A gruff voice called aloud to the corporal, in a burring Gloucester accent, to ask if the lieutenant were along there. The corporal was past speech. The man (I suppose a boatswain or boatswain's mate) got no answer. He said something, probably about the delights of being a soldier, and another man laughed a little.

"Pull hard now," whispered Dick. "And here's the wind."

A puff of wind came down the creek to us. The sail leaped, straining its sheet, and driving the boat forward. On the instant we bumped into a half-tide rock with a shock which flung us all down among the bottom-boards. The long-boat, surging forward on her towline, struck the cutter hard on the quarter, and nearly flung her over. Before we had shoved clear of the rock a voice hailed us from the jetty.

"What is that there? Who are you out in the creek there?"

"Lieutenant Atkins," cried Dick. "I'm pulling out to the frigate with important information."

There was no answer for a few seconds. The warrant officer was turning the matter over in his mind, not liking it particularly, and finding it very odd.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he hailed, "will you just pull over here, sir, for me to make sure?"

"Certainly," cried Dick. "Pull, starboard. Give way, port. Pull in there." In a low voice he bade the men pull for their lives to open water. It was a few seconds later, when way was on the boat again, so that we had the sea in fair view, that the boatswain trod on the lieutenant (as I suppose; but it may have been the corporal), and learned what we were. In just five seconds more he was blazing at us with his boarding-pistols. Men were rushing down to the shore, crying out

to the sentries there to fire at us. A slug struck the long-boat. The wind caught us again in a brisk gust, giving us good way A couple of musket balls went through the sail. A voice shouted to haul up the sail.

"Drop your guns," came the cry. "Drop your guns. Haul the chain across."

"Good lack," said Dick with a groan, "they've got a chain across the creek mouth. Now, I suppose, we're done in good earnest. Pull, boys, pull. There goes their capstan. We're caught like rats if you don't." The pawls on the capstan began to click as the seamen hove it round to drag the guarding chain across the mouth of the harbour.

"Shall we fire?" said one of our men.

"No," said Dick. "The flashes would show them where we are. Pull, boys. Here comes the wind. We're saved."

One of those strong dangerous gusts which blow down gullies and glens to the sea came fiercely on to us, heaving us all to one side. The water clucked and talked round us. The broken water, where the creek current met the sea, shook us and splashed us. We charged across it gallantly, plunging our tow. The capstan ceased clicking. I fancy that the men there recognized that they could never get the chain across in time to stop us. Instead of heaving they ran to their muskets, which had been piled somewhere near the sea. They were a well-drilled company. Before we cleared the

land they got down among the rocks as near to us as they could, and gave us a smart volley. It must have been fired pretty much at a random, for we could have been nothing more to them than a black shadow flitting over the lower stars, yet it had disastrous results to us. It took effect upon the cutter near the bows; indeed, it came near to missing us altogether, for I think no bullets passed abaft her amidships section. Forward of that it destroyed us. Both the bow oars were killed outright The starboard second bow died in a few minutes. His fellow, pulling on the same thwart, and hit perhaps by the same bullet, lingered unconscious for two days, and then drowsed away to death, knowing nothing of what had happened. The second midship oar had his right arm broken.

You may have seen birds or rabbits shot in the fields, and wondered at the suddenness with which the change from life to death comes. In one second the creature is running or flying, full of splendid energy. In the next it is a crumpled and bloody heap of feathers or fur, batting the ground while its eyes film. The change in the boat was like that. For one second we were all pulling and straining, hearing the feet of the seamen, and the locks clicking and the flints snapping. In the next second, before the roar of the guns was gone, violent death was among us, and one of us was crying out that he was hit. There was nothing to announce death, only a sharp little thudding noise made by the bullets

as they struck. Yet in that second there was all that shocking change, and those men had gone to their accounts, in the midst of all that violence, fresh from murder and robbery. I think that that moment was one of the most terrible ever spent by me. It made me very lonely; I cannot describe it better than that—very lonely, and wanting to cry. What moved me most was seeing them toss the dead men overboard, there and then, with neither prayer nor feeling, only a grumble at their weight. It was that callous toss over the side which seemed to brand it into me that I was shut away now from my own party in life, the party of order and honesty. I was being carried away, out into the dark, with outlaws whose hearts were like millstones. Life had been very cruel to me so far. I remember thinking of a little brook at home which had the property of crusting the leaves which dropped into it with a coat of lime till they were really leaves of lime, with their true leaf-like qualities gone from them. I should be like one of those leaves—the human being in me dead, and all the added callousness and cruelty crusting me over till they were all the nature of me.

IX.

After two hours of sailing seawards, drenched with the spray from the cutter's plunges and the wash off

the bows of the long-boat, we fired our pistols in the air by way of signal. Those in the *Marie Galante*, seeing the flashes, burned a blue light, and the frigate, thinking that we might be from the shore, fired a gun, showing her position too. We got aboard the *Marie Galante* somewhere in the first early greyness, when the sea was showing like a dull sheet of steel, heaving towards the observer and sinking from him. Voices hailed us from the black bulk of the ship telling us to give the word if we didn't want to be blown out of the sea. Then we drew alongside, hooked on, and, by Dick's direction, rigged up a yardarm tackle to clear the boats of the spoil. The man with the broken arm was told to get out of the way. No one was going to bother about him, they said. By the time we were up on the main-yard, bending the stolen sail, the frigate was within a mile of us, standing over to us with her men at quarters. I was up on the yard with Dick, and got my ears cuffed very shrewdly for looking round at her instead of helping in the work. We got the main-sail set before she tried her heavy guns on us. In fact, I don't think that we had so much as a shot from her until we had rigged a fore-topsail, and begun to hold our own in speed in the freshening wind. Then there came a strange whistling screech, which I had never heard before. It was not unlike the tearing of linen rags; but no sound known to me is quite like it, for there is something eerie and terrifying in it which other sounds want of. The shot which made it passed

astern, somewhere close to us. After it had gone, as the boom of the report reached us, I saw a pillar of water leap from the sea, then another, then another, dazzlingly white as the shot struck the sea with blows before it sank. We did not pause in our work because of the shooting. Firing at a moving target at such a range is not very dangerous to the target. We sent up a third sail and bent it. This third sail was soon seen to be enough to keep us out of danger. We began cheering whenever a shot came near us. We began now to draw away from the frigate, though we could see her men pouring water on the sails, and playing the hose on the courses so as to keep up with us if she possibly could. She lost way at every shot, for in order to fire she had to yaw out of her course. At last we saw that we had won the race. She saw it too, and gave up. We saw her yards swinging as she hauled more to the wind in order to beat back to the creek. Standing on the poop to see the last of her, I saw her great yellow hull, with its blue top-works, gleaming with the wet as she came round. Her flag blew clear, in a white ruffle marked with red. She surged down, creaming her catheads, then rose with a light airy roll, heaving her side out. Then, as I watched her, her side spurted fire, and to my intense surprise the air screamed suddenly with flying iron. A yard of the poop rail near me leaped up and overboard, spinning like a buzz-saw. Some blocks came down from aloft. A groove gouged itself before

my eyes in the dirty deck-planks, marked with so many footprints. Something white, I suppose a bit of wood, struck my finger a sharp tap, numbing it for the rest of the day. It was all over in a few seconds. A dozen iron round shot had carried to us from the broadside, all apparently hitting or flying over the poop. No great harm was done, nor were we fired at again. But the sudden hurtling of that destruction taught me something of the power and terror which lie controlled in a gun. I have never seen a gun since without having in mind the vision of that broken wood flying up suddenly from a seascape all peace and beauty.

X.

When we had escaped from the frigate we set a course for the Windward Passage. The hands wanted to know where we were going. They wanted to go to Port Royal, they said. They came aft in a body to ask us to put in to Jamaica, "where their friends lived." Dick, Little Theo, and I debated it down below. We had no very clear prospect of getting anywhere in that old ship, battered as she was. In our hearts, though, we felt that before all things we should go to Boca del Drago. The plan of the kingdom was not ruined, we said. We would go there. We would beat those thieves.

We would defend that treasury. Then, having saved it from sacrilege, we would carry the gold to Nicolai, and band ourselves to set Theo on the throne. It seemed so simple a thing to plan. The hands, to whom we confided something of it, consented. We were all going to make Theo a king, and to serve him as ministers and generals.

This was my belief, too, whenever I was in Theo's presence. But when I got away by myself, after some rough treatment by the hands or some agony of labour, it all seemed the maddest business. Then I thought that I was in the Ship of Fools, going to Gotham, and that Theo, brave, kind fellow as he was, was after all only a madman, driven mad by fever and cruelty. When I thought these things, wretched boy that I was, I used to long for some English frigate to capture us and take us home.

XI.

I need not say much about our passage. It was a nightmare to us all, I think. Five of the wounded men took fever, from drinking or careless treatment, and died, after a brief while of raving, and were tossed overboard without a prayer. The leak gave us trouble intermittently, in spite of the new mat. Sometimes it would terrify us all by gaining suddenly, in the middle

of the night perhaps, two feet, or even two feet six; so that we had to pump and bale for dear life, till the hands swooned at the brakes and lay on deck senseless, with the bright brine running over them. Then she would run dry for a season, and leak no more perhaps for two or three days. "Ah," those fools would say, "a fish has got into the seam;" or "Bill's blanket's done for her." Then they would laugh and sing, and grow mutinous and threatening. till the next scare humbled them. We were dreadfully short-handed all the time. As far as I remember, we had only eight men in a watch. Of those, one (or two, for she steered very wild with the wind at all aft) had to be at the helm, and another aloft looking out. That left us, at the most, six hands to do all the work of the ship, such as pumping, bracing the yards, setting up the rigging, and furling and loosing sail,, etc. Six were not enough to brace the lower yards up· so at every shift of wind all hands had to be called They came out grumbling and cursing, perhaps twenty minutes after being called; then when the work was done they went below again grumbling, and when they were wanted on deck again, they would refuse, even though it was their rightful watch.

"They were going to have their lawful sleep," they said. "They wouldn't come on deck till the time they had lost had been made good"

There was continual fighting among the men about

this question of sleep. Nor can I wonder; for the want of sleep makes men crusty, and sudden awakenings make crusty men savage, and, to a savage man, any little momentary injustice is cause enough for a fight. They might have overlooked the over-work (though we were all taxed to the limits of our strength by the almost incessant pumping) had they been properly fed; but we were all half starved all the time; for Doggy Sam (his real name was Samuel Pointer, and a pointer, as these wits agreed, was a dog) had taken most of the ship's provisions. We had a little bad beef and a little bad bread, nothing more, till some of the men, grown desperate, trapped the rats and ate them. I tried this mess once myself, but it made me sick (perhaps my rat was a bad one), and I never tried it again. The other men used to call it sea-chicken, and pretended that they liked it. To be short of food was bad enough; but our greatest hardship was want of water. We were going south into the hot latitudes, when a man craves for drink, even though it be of the kind carried in ship's water-casks, continually. We were on an allowance of water almost from the day we sailed—a pint a man a day, not a drop more, and this in the hot weather to men engaged in hard physical exercise through all day and half the night. One day a man stole my allowance from me I had put it in my hook-pot, below in the 'tween-decks, and when I came below for my dinner that day it had all been drunk; so that I would have

gone thirsty had not Dick made all hands give me what he called "dips" (that is, mouthfuls) from their allowances. Afterwards the thief was caught, in the act of drinking another man's allowance We tried him solemnly in the cabin, in what Dick called the "Brethren's Way." It was a rough but fair trial. They beat him severely, after sentence had passed—two cuts with a belt apiece; so that that kind of theft ceased among us. The coming down and finding my precious water gone was as bad to me that day as the loss of his crown is to a king. I think that none of us aboard there thought of anything except of water—springs of water bubbling up out of the ground; brooks of water going over pebbles; quiet pools and lakes, cold and clear; or bright, abundant waterfalls splashing the naked skin and the spray wetting the lips. When we slept we dreamed of water. Either it was raining down on us from heaven, filling the main-deck and the awnings and our own dry throats, or we were at a pond or river, wading out, as the cattle will when thirsty, to get wet before the luxury of drinking. Then we woke, or were wakened, to our mess of dry salt beef, boiled in salt water, and to our wearisome heaving of the pump-brakes, up and down, up and down, under a sky like blue flame, above a sea like glaring brass It was painful in another way. You may think it childish, but one of the worst torments of that thirsty time was the memory of days at home when I had had plenty of water, and had bathed

in it even, and wasted it, and flung it at my schoolfellows in one of our water fights, as we called them, and poured it away on flowers, and thought nothing of letting a tap run. I used to think of these things with agony day after day I can truly declare that from that time until this I have never wasted any water, nor can I bear to see others waste it. I see people treating it as a common thing enough; but to me it will never be that again. I had my drilling long ago, and a sharp drilling it was. To continue.

XII.

I do not know how long the passage was. I suppose it lasted a couple of weeks. To me it was like one long term of misery, throughout which the pumps were heaving and heaving. Up with a hard heave, down with a jerking bang, they went. The water spurted and jetted in a bright little fount. The men cursed and panted, snapping at each other just like wolves. "Put your weight on, you."

"I am putting my weight on."

"You're not. You're leaving it all to me."

"You call me a liar, and I'll give you something'll teach you."

"Hijo de puta."

"Cabron."

"Drop it, you swine. Pump, you. Stick your knives into each other when you get ashore."

Then the knives would be put back, and the men, still glaring at each other, would go on with that labour at the pumps. You say that labour is a noble thing. I say that it makes a man a wild beast if it be not proportioned and relieved That was a bad time in the *Marie Galante.*

At last one day when Dick, Theo, and I were alone in the cabin, there came a cry from aloft of "Land—oh;" and immediately after a cry of "Sail—oh." Low down on the starboard horizon there was something like a cloud with gleams on it.

"There, boy," said Dick, "that is the island of Cuba, that cloudy thing."

Something white flashed out against it, and then was lost even as I stared at it

"And that," he added, looking through his glass "is a brig, I fancy. A fine fast brig, making a passage from the Havana. Theo, she is crossing our bow."

"Yes," said Theo. "We shall save the temple yet. We shall get to the island before them"

After that we all went on deck, and laboured at wetting the sails, to give us speed. We had been like wolves in winter ever since we left Virginia. The sight of those white sails, swaying and flashing there, running down to cross our path, was like the sight of food and

shelter after long starving in the snow. There was a look of the wolf in all those men's faces. Until you see him looking out of a man's face you do not guess how vile a thing the beast of prey is, nor how cruel his spirit is. I assure you that it awed me to see the hungry savagery in those men. They were pumping, and passing buckets along, and every now and then they would pause and mutter, looking out upon the prize.

"Yes, you beauty," they said, "come on. Come on a little nearer. You come a bit nearer and we will change ships with you. You Cuban dons shall have a ship to go home in."

No one had said that we should attack the brig. No order had been given; but we were not like men any longer; we were like wolves, an instinct to kill had run through the pack. I felt it too; why should I pretend that I did not? We were half-starved and half-dead. We had not been living like men. We had been eating rats and drinking the drainings from the sails, glad of what we could get of them, and undergoing this—not for any noble end, as a scholar enduring hardship so that he may bring intellectual beauty to the world, or a soldier suffering wounds to bring peace, but so that we might have strength to pump, and to keep on pumping, lest we should drown, like the rats we ate, before another robbery could give us ease. And as we were not like living men, so the *Marie Galante* was no longer like a ship to us. She was the most bitter form

of prison, in which we moaned and toiled, always under sentence of death And there, coming over the sea, was deliverance. It seemed a natural thing that we should look upon the brig there as our prey, and that we should set ourselves instinctively to prepare to seize her. I know that every man there hungered like a wild beast for the rush that would take possession of her. They would have boarded a frigate rather than stay longer in that death cell.

"Knock off pumping, boys," one of the men cried. "We've pumped this hooker enough. Let her sink. I'd rather sink than rot at these brakes any more."

"Yes," said others, "if we don't take her we'll run her ashore on the cape there. We've had enough."

One man cried to heave the brakes overboard and wreck the pumps with an axe; but the others overruled this. The brig had the legs of us. There was some doubt whether we should get alongside of her: and leaking as we were, we might never reach "the cape there," without pumping. Still, the dreary up and down straining of the brakes ceased. It was strange to notice the quiet after the long hours of that monotonous noise. Very soon the decks, which had so long run brine, dried at last; and gleamed dry, covered with little white salt crystals. So we drove on to action quietly, rolling a little, while below, with faint irregular gurglings, the sea dribbled into our hold and washed and lipped there, splashing up as we pitched.

That was almost the last thing noticed by me before the actual encounter, for the men wanted me in the forecastle to turn the grindstone for them while they sharpened their hangers. I had no glimpse of the brig from where I worked; but each man, coming in in turn, told me something of her, if his nerves were not too tense for speech. One said that she showed Spanish colours, and that we had lowered our topsail to her by way of salute. Another said that she was one of the Havana despatch-boats going to Puerto-Rico. The last to come in said that she would cross our bows in another five minutes, at a distance of about half a cable (a hundred yards). He said that both ships were keeping their courses, as though unsuspicious of each other; that there seemed to be few men in the brig, and that our men were all lying down under cover, with loaded pistols in their hands, ready to rush up as we ran alongside of them. After this last man had gone, Dick looked in, and told me to go below into the fore-peak to see if the water were coming in. He said that I was to lie low there till I heard from him again.

XIII.

You will want to know how the battle went; and how, as we ran alongside, our gang boarded. You will

want to hear about the decks, the men with the handkerchiefs tied about their heads, the sudden falling of the killed, and all the violent hurry with which life and death mingle in a fight at sea. I cannot tell you anything of all that. I was down in the night of the fore-peak, hearing very little, except the wash and suck of the water parted by the bows, and the crying out of the rats. I heard a voice call, from somewhere outside the ship, and an answer from the deck in Spanish. Then another hail, startingly loud and near, followed by a bumping crash which flung me over. As I fell we bumped again, grindingly, as though the side of the ship were being crushed on a millstone. Then I heard cries and a shot or two, a stillness, then another mighty bump, with heavy falling on the deck above, as blocks and gear were shaken down from aloft by the collision. Shots and cries, both strangely unmeaning to me, followed on the last collision; then they too at last ceased, and it was all pretty quiet except for the grinding of the two ships together, and the sudden shouting out of Silvestre's voice, asking somebody a question. The water choked up between the two vessels. People were talking. Some one cried out "Yes," at a random, in answer to Silvestre. A voice called out excitedly to swing the foreyards before they got themselves tangled into kinks The brace rattled out, and I heard men calling out as they hauled. Presently some one just above me shouted aft.

"Yes. Down in the fore-peak", and then another

Englishman called to others to "get along there; march." I swung up out of the fore-peak at that, and into the 'tween-decks, just as our prisoners were being driven down to prison. One of the prisoners, a sad-looking Spaniard, with long black moustachios, stopped to stare at me at the foot of the upper-deck ladder. I think now that I must have resembled some one known to him. At the time I felt that he was wondering what a boy was doing in such company and I turned away my face ashamed. His look reproached me for a great while after.

There were seven of these prisoners altogether. Two of their crew, as I found afterwards, had been killed in the scuffle, and three more had been put in irons aboard the brig in order to be held to ransom.

"Don't you stand staring there," said one of our seamen to me. "Your eyes'll fall out. On deck with you, and help shift the gear into the brig." He kicked me savagely, swearing that he would like to knock my brains out.

On deck I found the seamen rapidly passing the few things left to us into the brig, which lay grinding alongside. Little Theo was sunning on a hatchway, giving words of encouragement. Dick was up aloft, on the main topsail-yard, sending the sail down by the halliards. Knowing that I should be beaten if I held back, I ran to the work in hand, and lent my pound to the rope. As I worked I asked French Jean, a seaman who had

always been kind to me, whether we were going to take all the sails away.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Why," said I. "Because if we do, the poor Spaniards will drown before they can reach the land. The ship will sink with them."

"We shall leave them a foresail," growled one of the Englishmen. "You keep your tongue in your head. Who cares whether they do drown?"

Somebody else said that I was getting to be a regular young sea-lawyer and wanted a good clumping. Silvestre bade them all keep quiet, and get along ahead with the work; there would be "time enough for clumping later on," he added

XIV.

In about half an hour we went aboard the brig and sheered off from the old *Marie Galante.* I had hated my life aboard her, as you can well imagine, and yet when I looked at the outside of her again, after all those weeks, I felt a sort of home-sickness, sharp and sudden. I knew the life to be had in her. The life before me in the brig was unknown to me, and therefore to be feared Something in the way the old battered ship lifted touched me. And then the sight of the Spaniards coming up on deck from their pen below, and

shaping a course for the nearest land, with such heavy hearts as you may guess, was pathetic, too; and then their sudden manning of the pump, scared perhaps by the discovery of the leak, not till then suspected, was painful. The last that I saw of her was an hour later, when we were five miles from her. She was then bright and shining like a nautilus, ploughing slowly towards Cape Maysi.

As for us, we had a fine brave wind to bustle us. Little Theo cracked on more sail, and drove the brig so that in a couple of hours the *Marie Galante* was hull down on the horizon.

"Yes," he cried, "you shall travel. You shall race. We shall beat them yet. We shall be at the island before them if the wind hold. Then we will reckon with them." He was in better spirits then he had enjoyed since that long-ago day in Virginia. He walked the deck excitedly, looking up at the sails and then away to starboard, on which side, distant some seventeen hundred miles from us, was his island of wonders. He seemed possessed of a spirit, walking the deck there. The sight of him set me wondering again whether that story of his could be true, in any part of it It was a wild, improbable story, the story of a madman; and yet I heard the sailors talking of very strange secrets possessed by the Indians, and of the magic practised by them, so that at last I think that something of the man's enthusiasm took hold of me. I remembered how

Dr. Carter, a great scholar, had told me years before that undoubtedly, beyond life, were many good and evil spirits, which could be controlled and coaxed by any earnest human soul, as might indeed be seen from the lives of saints and magicians. I began to think that perhaps this man had rediscovered some secret, long-forgotten by the white races, but still potent to bring the human soul into easier communion with the powers, whatever they might be. And though this belief wavered in me, like the sea at slack water, it kept cropping up. Perhaps he was mad, perhaps he was wise. And why, in that great strange land, overgrown with forests, in which mysterious peoples had built and vanished, should there not be a record of wisdom, wilder and stranger than any wisdom preserved by us? What was it? What was in that temple on the hill? Could it all be an invention, or the result of sunstroke, or something hideously remembered from one of the dreams that come in fever?

We were in the windward passage that evening. The sunset was dying out of the west, the stars were showing Dick and I sat aft on the deck, lazily making chafing-gear together in the failing light Little Theo stood near to us, looking out as before, to starboard, towards his island. Abaft us was the helmsman. The rest of the crew were scattered about the deck, getting ready, as I thought, to hold one of their sing-songs, or sea-concerts, to the music of Leon's bugle. A few of them strolled aft casually, and got into talk with Dick.

asking what the chafing-gear was for, and yarning about old times at sea. One of them, as I remembered, had been a peon on the plantation in which Sir Henry Morgan had died. He told of that soldier's death. Two or three others fetched up alongside Theo, and I, finding it too dusky now for my work, listened idly to what they said, but paid little enough heed to it till afterwards. The talk was partly in Spanish, of which I had already picked up a good deal, and partly in seamen's English. It ran something like this:—

A man. She is a good brig to go, Cap.

Theo. Yes She is fast. She is a good brig.

The man. A pleasant change after the *Marie Galante.* She was a useless article.

Theo. Yes.

The man. We had enough of pumping in the *Marie Galante.* A hungry, hard-working, skinflint life aboard that hooker.

Theo. Yes.

The man. Time we had a change, I guess.

Theo. We shall do it now.

The man. What are your plans, Cap? Back to the island to head them off?

Theo. Yes. Back to the island Back to my secret. Back to my task

The man Don't you think that we could do with a little jaunt, Cap, after all this hazing?

Theo. What do you mean by that?

The man. There's Tortuga over yonder, Cap. It's pleasant in Tortuga.

Theo. Well?

The man. What would be the harm in just going into Tortuga for a couple of days? It would set us all up after what we've been through.

Another man. Sure, Cap. Let's let her go off for Tortuga. The island's almost in sight.

Another man (sitting by me). Tortuga. It's a fine place, Tortuga. I'd rather have a day in Tortuga than spend a week in any island you care to give a name to.

Another man. That's what I say. I've had enough for one trip. I want a rest (Here he rose and came close up to Theo) And what I say is, I'm going to have it.

Dick. That's enough of that. Put a stopper over all, there.

Theo. So you want to put into Tortuga?

All. Yes.

Theo. And go ashore to get drunk?

All. Yes.

Theo. Then I tell you that you'll do nothing of the kind. You'll back off from here, and work this brig to Boca Drago. Get forward with you to your work.

Dick. You hear, there. Clear out of this.

All. Don't you mix up with this, Dick. It's nothing

to do with you. Now, Theo, are you going to put into Tortuga?

Theo. Stand back. Get forward. You've had your answer.

Dick Look out, Cap. Draw your gun or he'll rope you.

In another instant Dick was slung backwards on to the deck, and as he lay there a couple of seamen sat upon him. Little Theo, clove-hitched round his elbows, was knocked over on his face. Both were bound up as tightly as a man-of-warsman's hammock.

"Now then," said Silvestre, "you see? You forbade us to go ashore. Muy bien. Now I am captain, not you. And now that I am captain, I tell you that your story of going to the island is a story of a cow and a hen, and yourself are no more good than a twice-laid rope. So. Muy bien. You shall cease to be captain You shall go ashore and tell your tales to the French at Petit Guaves"

"What about the boy?" said one of the seamen, indicating me. "He's a regular hanger-on of the cabin lot. I vote that he goes with them."

"Yes," said another man. "He's no good. Dirty, idle shrimshanker. He's an unlucky youngster anyway. Let him go with them"

"Yes," said another. "And now that that is settled, we'll put these charming birds down below till we make

port. Let them sing and hang together." With this, they bundled us down into the cabin. It was dark in the cabin. Those on deck flung a tarpaulin over the skylight, so that we could not see the stars. We lay bound, flat on our backs, staring up at darkness. Sometimes, by moving our heads a little, we could see a gleam on the water through the cabin windows Sometimes a man came groping in to get something, letting in a little light from without. Otherwise we felt, as I have sometimes fancied, that the statues in a church must feel not quite alive Little Theo was silent The sudden dashing of his hope just when all had seemed possible to him, had made him as mute as a fish Dick at first was silent too He showed then, I think, that his was not (as I had thought) a master's mind. He was looking to Theo to direct him. He was good enough at some common emergency of the sea, such as the mending of a pump, or the stealing of the frigate's topsails; but now he was dashed and crestfallen, waiting for his captain to save him He had tried to reason with the hands, in his good-tempered way; but he did not understand these Spanish people, and his words, which might have moved an English crew, only irritated them. He saw this, and had the good sense to be quiet. So we lay there in the cabin; and for my part I could not help thinking of that verse in the Psalms which tells us that "bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days."

"Dick," I said, "what are they going to do to us?"

"It'll be all right," he said. "Don't worry, boy. We'll build our bridges when we come to the river. It'll be all right."

"Are they going to sell us, Dick?"

"I dunno," he answered. "Maybe that's what they'll try to do. But don't you worry; I'll pull you through." After that we were silent together for about half an hour. Then Dick spoke again.

"I'm sorry for you, Cap. But maybe it will pan out not so bad."

"I am hoping so," said Theo coldly.

"I didn't think it of Silvestre," said Dick. "I wasn't quick enough. That was where I let you in. I ought to have seen their game at once"

"It may be a good thing," said Theo. I imagine from what happened afterwards that something had come into his mind. "Have you ever been in Tortuga? I mean, to live?"

"Yes," said Dick, "I've been there"

"What sort of a harbour is it there?"

"No harbour," said Dick dully; "only a road, where I was—a road full of cat-boats and sloops. All the scum of the Caribbean go there to buy letters of marque from the French. Cat-boats and sloops, and then an uphill sort of a shanty-town with a lot of seamen drinking caña"

"The Spaniards burnt it once," said Theo. "Spain was too merciful; she ought to have settled it with people."

"Well, don't let's worry," said Dick; "let's sleep."

XV.

He was a tough sailor, able to sleep pretty much wherever he pleased. He edged himself into a comfortable position, and fell asleep in a moment. Theo said that he too would sleep, but I, who was awake for a long while after that, wondering what would happen to me, and whether I would ever see my father again, could tell that he did not sleep. He said "Ah" excitedly once or twice, as though something good had occurred to him; and when I woke, just before the dawn, he was still awake, muttering to himself. He said that he had not yet been to sleep; but that it was all right, he could do without.

We made the western end of Tortuga the next morning. By noon we were up with it, sailing about a mile from the shore, with the shipping in the roadstead plainly visible, though still pretty far away ahead of us. They lowered a boat off the western end of the island Silvestre and three others got into it. They were there, with their oars out, dragging alongside, as the brig slowly forged

ahead, when (our ankle-bonds being cut) we were marched up on deck into the light.

"Well, boys," said Dick easily, "what is it going to be?"

"Get down into the boat here," said Silvestre; "you're going ashore."

Dick scowled at me as though to say, "You be quiet," and led the way down. When we were settled in the stern-sheets the boat was cast off. Silvestre, who pulled the stroke-oar, sneered at us, asking if we should like being sold. Dick nudged me hard to keep quiet. Nobody answered Silvestre. We sat with bound hands in the stern-sheets, staring into his face. He had a yellowish face, with broken teeth which showed when he grinned. He wore ear-rings, and a whitish kind of a hat. The bulwarks of the brig were lined with similar faces, staring down at us The brig seemed to roll a good deal; for there was a swell, and hardly any wind. As she drew away from us I read the name on her transom, *Nuestra Señora la Virgen Santisima*, and the port name, Havana, in gold underneath Some one, anxious to show his contempt for us, fired two pistols at us from over the taffrail while we were within easy range. The shot splashed the water on to Theo's hands, and lay there in little bright drops. He did not trouble even to shake them away; but sat still as before, staring into Silvestre's face. There was something in his look which frightened me. The water-drops made his skin look like canvas.

I kept thinking of the similarity. Silvestre rowed slowly, pausing after each stroke to stare back at Theo. Sometimes he paused in his rowing altogether, letting the boat drift, while he stared into his prisoner's eyes. I had the horrible fancy that he was debating whether to cut his throat or not. When he stopped rowing I looked at the hilt of his knife, which peeped out of its sheath in the belt lying on the thwart beside him, where he had flung it so that he might row more easily. It was an ordinary Spanish sheath knife, with a sort of brass bird on the top of the handle. It looked like a duck, but it was meant for a phœnix I wondered what we could do if he laid aside his oar and reached for that knife. We could upset the boat, I thought, and all drown together, prisoners and masters, or be torn by the sharks. There were sharks there. One came nuzzling past, with a great rippling heave, showing the white of his belly as he shouldered down

The boat gently grated past a submerged rock. Silvestre stood up, and turned round. To me, in my disordered state, it seemed that he was going to kill us, and that he was looking round for support among his crew. One of the men caught his eye, and guessed his intention (if indeed it had been what I thought). Perhaps there was some exchange of looks between them

"We'll land them on the rocks, boss," he said "It's sheltered to leeward of the spit Pull in"

After that Silvestre's intention cooled off He sat

down, fingering his knife, and then went on with his rowing. He kept looking at us in an ugly way; but he made no attempt upon us. We were safe for that time. We drove in on a hissing roller, to a sheltered place among the rocks.

"Jump out," said one of the men.

"Pull in, and let us jump ashore," said Dick. "What sort of a place is this to land us?"

"Good enough for you. Jump out," said Silvestre; "if not, we will throw you."

Theo jumped at once on to the rock; I followed him; Dick lingered to speak his mind to Silvestre.

"Come along, Dick," I cried. I was afraid that he would taunt them into some desperate cruelty.

"Get out," said Silvestre, raising his oar.

Dick jumped on to the rock beside me, to finish what he had to say in safety.

"Otra vez, Silvestre," he said. "Otra vez. Hasta luego, you amarillo perro. A Portuguese drummer's cabron was your abbeyalo. Sabe? Mañana, mozos."

The men laughed at Silvestre's ugly face. They looked at him and from one to another, expecting him to avenge the insult. Dick waited for a few seconds to see whether he would, but he did not; I don't know why. Perhaps he felt that even the pirates would have despised him for hurting men whose hands were tied. He scowled at us, and grinned to see us pitching on our faces (as of course we did, owing to our hands being bound) when

we jumped from rock to rock. He was a bad man, Silvestre.

XVI.

After going about fifteen yards we came to a narrow gut of sea, where we saw that we should have to wade. Beyond it there was a steep bit of rock, difficult enough to climb even with free hands.

"Kneel down, boy," said Dick, "and see if you can bite my hand-lashings in two."

I knelt on the sharp rocks, and gnawed at the spunyarn till I got a bit of it gnawed in two After that Dick soon freed himself, and set us free. We stood together, chafing our numbed hands, watching the boat, which was now fifty yards from us, near the ground The brig had backed her topsail for them. She lay gracefully heaving, "seething in her own milk," as Dick said. Something flashed from the boat and went in a gleam ashore. The boatmen cried to us, pointing to where the bright thing lay on the sand.

"They've thrown us a machete," said Dick. "I'm going to throw them something." His knife had been taken from him. In his pockets he had a case of wick-trimming scissors, such as are used at sea for the binnacle lamps half a dozen times in a night With these he snipped off a bit of leather from his belt, and trimmed

have a plan. We are going to the island, you and I We have a chance yet. Who knows ? "

" Nobody knows," said Dick : " but I don't see what chance there is."

" Yes," said Theo ; " to-night there will be a chance We shall get aboard one of the sloops in the Road, and put to sea in her. In two weeks we shall be at the island. I tell you that the spirit tells me. The road is made plain to me. In two weeks we shall be in the lagoon there, the northern lagoon, in time. I am quite sure that we shall be in time."

" It is a crazy plan," I said. I had grown very old for my years, with all these excitements and miseries. Now I felt myself the equal of these two grown men. I spoke up boldly to them Why should they settle my destiny for me ?

" Not so crazy," said Dick. " But first we have to cross this island. And there's not much chance of doing that, by all accounts. There's the Tortuga copper-head."

" What is that ? " I asked.

" A snake," he said. " Not a very big one. He lies in the canebrakes for mice, and strikes you before you see him. He is a surly snake He doesn't move out of your way like other snakes. But, if we get across the island, we must get out of it at once, be sure of that. This is pirate's island, where we three will be outlaws ; any man strong enough to take us can enslave us. That's the French law about foreigners Neither you nor I

intend to go into slavery again. The only other chance for us is to ship in privateers and go out a-cruising with the gang again; rum and dough-boys. The brig there has given me enough of privateers. There's no life for a man in a privateer"

"Yes," said Theo, "we must go to the island. I told you so"

"It's fifteen hundred miles, Cap," said Dick.

"The road will be cleared for us," said Theo. "Old Father Coal-White, the negro, came to live in Tortuga. He would help us if we could find him."

"The brig is up to the roads," said Dick. "If they tell the planters about us, there'll be a hue and cry. All the farmers will be out to catch us. We must start"

We set out on our long march through the scrub. We cut ourselves sharp stakes as weapons. We took it in turns to cut a way with the machete. Whenever we came to a fruit-tree we ate. The sun rose up to blister us as we marched. We drank at every puddle and brook to which we came. It was death to drink such stuff, we told each other, but then it was death not to drink We did not think much about the snakes when once the agony of thirst had begun. At about five in the evening we were attacked by that pest, "the bête rouge," a little stinging beast about as big as a pin's head. It is a little creature, but its bite sows a man's flesh with little burning fire sparks, which rage like

vitriol. After some time we found an oily kind of leaf which soothed the pain of these bites; but for a while they took all heart out of us. When a man is in fierce pain he is apt to think of nothing else. The thirst, pain, and weariness destroyed our fear of snakes, and made us go incautiously, forgetting that now we were outlaws in a foreign land, prizes for whoever would take us. Going on thus carelessly, with our heads down, we came suddenly to a sugar-mill, where a few slaves were piling their mattocks at the end of the day's work. We had hoped to avoid people altogether, perhaps, if we had been cautious, we might have avoided these; but there it was. We came plump upon them, with no lie ready, and such a startled, guilty look as made them suspicious, as we could see by the way they stared.

Theo spoke to them at once, asking if this were the Soleil d'Or estancia. They replied surlily by asking us what we were.

"Good Frenchmen," said Theo, without thinking. "Good Frenchmen in the tobacco trade, crossing the island for stores"

They stared at us suspiciously, without speaking, for some little time. Not liking their silence, Theo asked them if Father Coal-White, the negro witch doctor, still lived at Port of Peace. They did not answer him at once. They all stood very still, staring hard. Then one of them, moving a step forward, replied that nearly all the negroes in the island had died of lung-sickness the

year before—"As surely we knew," he added shrewdly, "if we were islanders as we maintained"

"Naturally, I know all that," said Theo. "I want to know whether he survived the lung-sickness."

They did not answer him, but muttered among themselves. Then one of them, smiling, asked us whence we came and whither we were going. Theo said that we were going to Port of Peace.

"And the boy," said the slave, quickly changing into Spanish, "es tambien Frances el muchacho?" [Is the boy also French?]

It was easy to see that the slaves thought us liars. They had caught some Spanish trick of accent in Theo's French, and now tried to surprise him into speaking Spanish. Theo's face looked very blank, as though he did not understand.

"Allons," he said, turning to us. We began to shog off upon our road, while the slaves, still staring at us, nodded to each other and muttered in the slaves' patois, which none of us knew.

"They take us for runaway slaves," said Theo, under his breath to us. "They get a reward for catching runaways We must get rid of them"

One of them, the smiler, came after us, offering to guide us into Port of Peace by a short cut. Theo told him that we already knew the short cut, and that we disliked the society of slaves, who were reckoned pretty low in the scale in Tortuga in that year of grace He

thought that this would quiet the fellow; but no, he became both saucy and truculent. He must have been a favourite of his master or nearly out of his time. He followed us at a little distance, no doubt to watch whether we took the short cut. Now and then he flung little pebbles at us, and called out abusively.

"Never mind him," said Dick quietly. "If we round on him we'll be tackled by the rest of the slaves. Come on, and pay no attention."

"Not so," said Theo. "That would prove us to be slaves in their opinion. No free man would stand such insolence here. We will treat him with the high hand. Here he comes again. Now, after him"

We rogue-marched the fellow with us for some little distance, and then Dick cobbed him with a cudgel. It was a lucky thing as it proved that we brought him with us a little way instead of cudgelling him on the spot, for I learned, long afterwards, that the man, when we let him go, ran back to the estancia for the blood-hounds, vowing that we were escaped slaves. The hounds (having just been fed) would not work the scent; whereas, had we let him go at once, he would have reached the estancia before the feeding-time, and we should have been run down and taken.

XVIII.

We got to the first house of Port of Peace at about twelve that night. A dog was baying the moon in the street before us, with his head thrown up, and his shadow beside him, black as ink. A lamp or two burned in the town, which sloped to the sea in a street of wooden huts, some of them tottery and quaint in the moonlight. A negro was beating a drum, far away below in a hut, near the water. Otherwise the town seemed deserted, the town of a dream, the town of the sleeping beauty. One or two negroes lay asleep in the street. A drunkard, talking to himself in the dark, was the only voice heard by us as we passed through.

There was a plank pier, jutting out into the water between handrails, at the end of the town. At the end of the pier stood a cluster of poles to which boats were moored. One little boat had oars in her. We got into this boat, and pulled her in to the Road among the shipping. The Road was very full of shipping. A privateer was fitting a fleet there (I believe) to cut logwood. The ships lay in tiers everywhere at double moorings. A light mist about them made them unreal and very beautiful. It was all like a dream, that night adventure.

The sloops and small craft lay nearer to the shore than the bigger ships. We rowed to a small sloop which looked to be newly in from the sea, since she was loaded

and had her sails bent We were not careful any longer. Something in the night and the sea gave us confidence, and it was not so dangerous as it sounds. I think that we could have gone aboard any ship there with equal certainty. Every man in all that shipping had gone ashore to sleep. It was the custom in Tortuga among the privateers, as Dick said. There was no fever in Tortuga, and the custom suited the public-house keepers. We got aboard the sloop and examined her.

She was padlocked at all her hatches; no one was aboard her. She smelt very strong of logwood. There was "no need to ask what she was," so Dick said. That was the first time I ever smelt the logwood smell. Afterwards, as you might say, I scented my life with it. We broke open the padlocks with a spike from the boatswain's locker. We threw the hatches back to let the air into the cabins, and then turned to together to get the anchor up.

"We shall get to the island," said Theo quietly. "I told you that the road would be cleared."

"Yes," said Dick; "we shall make the island. We can begin again at the island."

XIX

It comes back to me like madness, now; yet at the time it seemed to be the only thing for us to do. So

plete my work. Then I shall know the words of power; and I shall speak them to the Indians, and they will rise up and drive out the foreigners. I shall be Manco Capac come again. Blow, you wind. In a few days I may be learning the word which makes the wind blow."

By dawn we were off Rabel, a weary trio, reckoning the food and water which was to carry us so far.

XX.

We made the island. We rose Sombrero Peak at dawn one morning three weeks later He glowed at us out of the mist, catching the sun high up, before the dawn had broken. The wind died away after that, and all day long we lay within sight of him, tossing on the sea, unable to get any nearer. At dusk a wind caught us, and hurried us so near that we could see the lagoon entrance. We dared not stand in, there was such a run of surf. We saw no trace of man on the island, nor any ship's mast rising up over the neck of land which shut the lagoon from the sea.

"We have come in time," said Theo "We have beaten them."

When he said that, dropping with weariness as I was, I stood up to stare at the island. It was the place which

had been in my mind for so long a time. There it was before us, dim and blue and fast fading, a darkness flushed on its higher crags, and ringed with the gleam of surf. And to-morrow, I thought, we shall be—what? Three poor forlorn men at the ends of the world, or—? It gave me awe to think that. "And there on the island," I thought, "even if all that he thinks be false, there has been a civilization. There has been a race which built temples and made poems. They looked out over the sea here." I wondered if any of them ever thought that all their splendour and wisdom would pass away so utterly that a man believing in either would be counted a madman. Was he a madman? The brain of man holds marvellous things. Dick, coming up half drowsed to head the sloop away from the land, told me that we should soon know now.

"And if he becomes an idol," said Dick, "and rules the Indians, you and I'll have happy days being priests."

We went into the lagoon with a brisk breeze the next morning, before the sun was out of the sea. I had expected to see some trace at least of building there. Instead of that there was nothing but jungle, and the traces of recent fires among the scrub.

"We're too late, I guess," said Dick calmly. "The scrub's burnt"

"Be quiet," said Theo. "They have been here, but they may have done no harm. Let go the anchor."

We went ashore there, all three together. We went through the wood by a narrow track-no broader than a horse's girth. Swathes of dead creepers lay on each side of the track, where the machetes had slashed them down. There were footprints in the mud of the path, the marks of boot heels

"These footprints were made a week ago," said Dick. "Regular cow-hunters' boots, and one of them lame in the left leg Doggy Sam has beaten you, Cap."

"Be quiet," said Theo. "They may have done no harm. Come on."

Soon we had climbed the scree, and crossed the broken ground of the landslide Now Dick took me by the arm and pinched me, for a droning kind of a pipe was wailing out of the earth all round me, changing and roaring till the air was full of it, and then dwindling into almost nothing

"There is the whistling," said Theo , "but we have come too late for the rest"

Down below in a little hollow lay a heap of broken reddish iron stones, scattered confusedly into a cairn. Above the cairn stood a cleft pole, with a tin plate stuck in the cleft. We slithered into the valley, and hauled down that ensign There was writing on it, scratched with a knife Dick read it out, while Theo looked about among the stones.

"Captain Theo," it ran, "your joss-house is smash-

oh. We done it good with kegs of powder. You was a roten Cap. Smash-oh. We are havin good times.

Sam, mr mr. Prins of Wals.
Bill. Govenor of Jamaica.
Charls. Adml.

So long, you dago swot."

Theo sat down among the rubbish, and held out a broken tablet which had once been ingeniously carved. "The clock is put back," he said simply. "The temple is blown to pieces. The Indians must wait, that is all. *I am not to be Manco Capac.*"

"Cheer up," said Dick; "it's not your fault."

"No; it's not my fault," said Theo. "But it is strange. All these months I have felt that I was divinely inspired to do this work among the Indians. I have felt that I was the agent of higher powers. And, after all their help and suggestion, a fool with a keg of powder stops the work forever."

"He may be an agent for even higher powers," I said.

"Maybe," said Dick, evidently much struck by my remark. "But why should he stop it forever? Why not go on to Nicolai? The temple was all foolishness. Put it out of your head, Cap We'll go on to Nicolai and be kings, like what you said We could be kings without any temple, I guess. We're Christians, teak-bound. We don't allow temples in our religion. Cheer

up. Cheer up, man. We'll go on to Nicolai and be kings"

"We cannot go on to Nicolai," said Theo. "Our sloop comes from the logwood camps. If we went near the Lagoon of Tides the sloop would be recognized. We should be hanged as pirates."

"We can't stop here," I said.

XXI.

It was Dick who solved the problem.

"Well," he said, "the king scheme's done with. It was good while it lasted, it gave us good fun. But it's done with. Shut it out of your head, Cap. Meanwhile, this stuff under our feet here is iron ore worth working."

"Well?" I said.

"We'll sail for Jamaica this afternoon," said Dick, "as soon as our water's filled. We'll file our claim to the island, and come back and get to work."

"What then?" said Theo

"Why," he said cheerily, "we'll get that iron up, and sell it to the Navy Yards. It'll be better than smuggling."

"I don't want anything," said Theo "My life ended when they put the match to the train"

"Life goes on," said Dick, shoving him ahead along the path to the lagoon, "and iron is twenty pounds the

ton. You won't think of no grief when you got a few tons of iron on the top of it. Pascar, my son. We'll sail."

That afternoon we sailed.

Y todas las cosas se pasan.
Las memorias se acaban.
Las lenguas se cansan.

THE END

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